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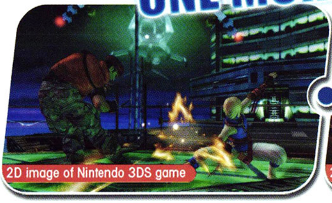
266
APRIL 2011
SUBSCRIBER EDITION

DEAD OR ALIVE® Dimensions

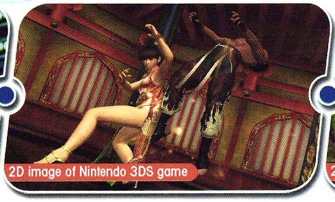
"Looks damn good…gorgeous for a handheld."
-destructoid.com

"The fighting was fast, fluid, and accurate, and the level of graphical detail was impressive."
-GameSpot

ONE MORE TIME, ONE MORE FIGHT



2D image of Nintendo 3DS game



2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

The comprehensive DOA experience, relive the history of one of the most electric fighting franchises of all time. With a new story that spans the timelines of all four DOA installments, a full character roster with new playable characters and some of the best interactive stages the series has to offer. This is it.. step up to the next dimension in fighting!

2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

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DEAD OR ALIVE | I'm a fighter

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TEEN

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Mild Language
Partial Nudity
Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol
Violence

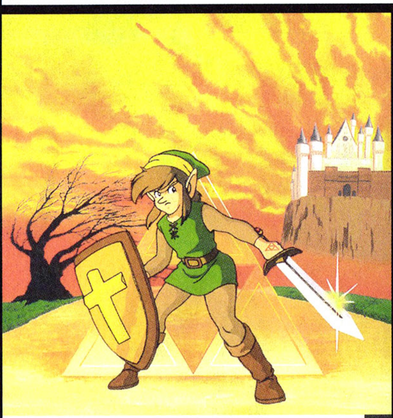
CONTENTS • APRIL 2011

Guns for Hire 42
Forget about solving puzzles and running from bad guys. Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D brings the hit series to Nintendo 3DS with an emphasis on gorgeous graphics and multiplayer action. Plus—we celebrate Resident Evil's 15th anniversary.

The Greatest Moments of The Legend of Zelda: NES Era 49
Remember exploring the Lost Woods? Or when you found the Magic Sword? Or when you met Error? We look back at the most unforgettable moments of The Legend of Zelda and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link.

Out of the Blue 58
If you're seeking an awesome, explosive fighting game with cutting-edge visuals, then look no further. BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 2 is coming to Nintendo 3DS, and we've got an exclusive first report.

RESIDENT EVIL: THE MERCENARIES 3D 42



THE GREATEST MOMENTS OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: NES ERA 49

BLAZBLUE: CONTINUUM SHIFT 2 58

The Struggle for Time and Space Begins Again!

Pokémon Trainer Ash and his Pikachu must find the Jewel of Life and stop Arceus from devastating all existence! The journey will be both dangerous and uncertain: even if Ash and his friends can set an old wrong right again, will there be time to return the Jewel of Life before Arceus destroys everything and everyone they've ever known?

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CONTENTS • APRIL 2011

DEPARTMENTS

Pulse 6

Power Up 10

Download 26

Previews 32
- Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion 39
- Dead or Alive Dimensions 32
- Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions 34
- Rabbids Travel in Time 3D 35
- Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked 36
- SpongeBob SquigglePants (Nintendo 3DS) 35
- Thor: God of Thunder (Wii, DS) 40
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D 39
- Virtua Tennis 4 38

Power Profiles 66

Playback 70

Reviews 73
- Asphalt 3D 86
- Conduit 2 76
- LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars (Wii, DS, Nintendo 3DS) 81
- Madden NFL Football 77
- nintendogs + cats 80
- Pilotwings Resort 82
- Rango (Wii, DS) 86
- Rayman 3D 85
- Ridge Racer 3D 78
- Samurai Warriors: Chronicles 85
- The Sims 3 81
- SpongeBob SquigglePants (Wii) 85
- Steel Diver 88
- Super Monkey Ball 3D 86
- Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition 74
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters 84
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars 77
- Top Spin 4 85
- WWE All Stars 87

Community 92

Next Month 96

POWER UP THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME 3D 10

DOWNLOAD HORIZON RIDERS 26

PREVIEW DEAD OR ALIVE DIMENSIONS 32

REVIEW PILOTWINGS RESORT 82

GAME INDEX

101 Dolphin Pets 29
505 Tangram 29
All-Star Air Hockey 29
Arctic Escape 29
Asphalt 3D 86
Bit.Trip Flux 28
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 2 58
Boom Boom Squaries 29
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion 39
Conduit 2 76
Dead or Alive Dimensions 32
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights 22
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation 12
Faxanadu 28
G.G Series Dark Spirits 29
G.G Series Drift Circuit 29
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 14
Horizon Riders 26
Jewel Keepers: Easter Island 28
The Legend of Zelda 49
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D 10
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword 10
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game 14
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars (Wii, DS, Nintendo 3DS) 81
Madden NFL Football 77
Magic Destiny 28
Magnetic Joe 29
Mahjong 30
Monster Buster Club 30
Motoheroz 27
My Little Restaurant 30
nintendogs + cats 80
Oscar in Toyland 2 30
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions 34
Panda Craze 30
Penguins in Peril 27
Pilotwings Resort 82
Pucca's Kisses Game 28
Rabbids Travel in Time 3D 35
Rango (Wii, DS) 86
Rayman 3D 85
Remote Racers 30
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D 42
Ridge Racer 3D 78
S.C.A.T. 29
Samurai Warriors: Chronicles 85
Shawn Johnson Gymnastics 30
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked 36
The Sims 3 81
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure 22
SpongeBob SquigglePants (Nintendo 3DS) 35
SpongeBob SquigglePants (Wii) 85
Spot the Differences! 28
Steel Diver 88
Super Mario* 11
Super Monkey Ball 3D 86
Super Smash TV 70
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition 74
Thor: God of Thunder (Wii, DS) 40
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters 84
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars 77
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D 39
Top Spin 4 85
Treasure Hunter X 30
Treasure Report 14
Unchain Blades Rexx 14
Virtua Tennis 4 38
WWE All Stars 87
Zelda II: The Adventure of Link 49

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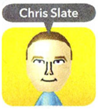
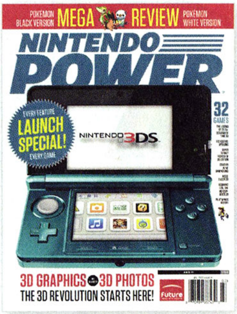
Pulse

First Impressions



I've been happily carrying a Nintendo 3DS system around with me this month, and I've quickly fallen in love with the latest addition to the Nintendo family. From its cool menus to its generous amount of built-in software, there's just so much to see, do, and explore before you even put a Game Card into the system: it's fun to show people the amazing augmented reality games; I'm addicted to the Mii Plaza minigames; and despite the fact that I've made countless Mii characters on Wii, doing so on Nintendo 3DS somehow feels magical again. (That's my new and improved Mii up above—scan the QR code beneath his picture with a Nintendo 3DS to invite him onto your system!) The Circle Pad is an absolute dream to use, and makes an even bigger difference than I would have imagined—almost as much as the 3D visuals. Speaking of which, I continue to be amazed by the 3D screen, no matter how many hours I spend gazing at it. It's caused no problems for me, and has only made my gaming experiences more immersive and interesting. But enough about what I think; go out and try the Nintendo 3DS for yourself. (You can look up a nearby demo location at www.nintendo.com/3ds/events). And be sure to let me know how you like it!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**



V265 MARCH 2011

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while walking in circles to amass my Play Coins. But first, this month's special letter request: what are your impressions of the Nintendo 3DS? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

The Game of Life

My brother and I are still kids—I'm eleven and he's eight. Our mom keeps telling us to spend more time mastering chores and less time mastering video games. Then it hit her: turn our chores into video games! She told us that each day we get three lives, and every time we talk, goof off, or do our chores lazily, we lose a life. If we lose all three lives we get a "game over," and that means no video games for a week! My mom also sets up little extra chores, such as leaving her shoes out and getting us to put them away by putting 1-ups and power-ups inside them. Each item has a reward or an extra life! Now we have more fun with our chores and have more time for video games! **—LUCKY LUKE**

A word of warning to your mom: I tried this same strategy on the NP staff until they eventually decided I was the "final boss" and took turns jumping on my head.

Tears of Joy

I recently beat Super Mario Galaxy and the credit music choked me up (I cried). That piece is the most magical music ever orchestrated. And when I got the Super Mario All-Stars CD, that same awesome track was on it! How lucky am I? **—TJ COMBO**

Fair or Foul?

I was playing Donkey Kong Country Returns with my friend the other day, and there was this one part with lots of enemies that I couldn't get through. So, my friend purposely hit an enemy so that he could use the split second where he was blinking and invincible to charge through the hard part. Isn't this cheating?! It's abusing the invincibility! The game designers made you a challenge on purpose! Any fool can cheat their way across a hard part, but it takes a really skilled player to beat it properly. What do you think? **—CREAM THE RABBIT**

What your friend did doesn't really bother me, but I understand where you're coming from. I don't like racing against people who "snake" in older Mario Kart games—that is, they constantly drift from side to side, even on straightaways, to maintain an unbeatable speed. But the snakers would argue that they have merely developed a skill supported by the game's design. What do all of you readers think? Where do you draw the line between utilizing game-design loopholes and outright cheating?

Wart Watch

What ever happened to good ol' Wart from Super Mario Bros. 2? Our veggie-hating amphibian anti-friend needs to come home! **—COSMIC BOSHI**

I'm so happy to see that Nintendo's new handheld is getting serious entries from franchises that don't usually give a lot of love to Nintendo systems, like Dead or Alive, Resident Evil, Street Fighter, and Ridge Racer. With these kinds of games *plus* Nintendo's own stellar series, Nintendo 3DS will be unstoppable! **—DAVEY J.**

LETHAL BEAUTY

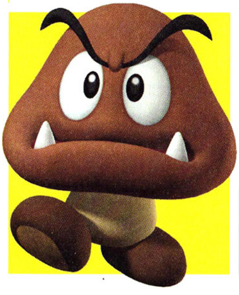
Team Ninja's comely combatants get the 3D treatment in Dead or Alive Dimensions.

If you've never played a Dead or Alive game before, your perception of the series may revolve around its penchant for suggestively clad female brawlers with exaggerated... bounce. But DOA is more than just a source of physics-infused titillation; it's also a damn fine fighting franchise. Nintendo 3DS owners will have the opportunity to discover that for themselves when Dead or Alive Dimensions hits the handheld at launch.

Get the Word Out

I like a lot of the games that were on your list of DS must-haves [Vol. 264], but I don't think you should have included multiple titles from a single series. Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors is one of the most compelling games for DS, and it could have earned itself a spot if it weren't for all the Phoenix Wrights and Professor Laytons. None of my friends have even heard of 999, so I was hoping you would spread the word. **—IAN**

Don't worry, Ian—we aren't done singing the praises of 999. Check back next issue for a special article about this largely unheard-of game that everyone should be playing. As for our list of essential DS games, we decided to include multiple titles in a series only when the games were different enough to stand on their own. It just wouldn't be fair to—for example—cut one of Link's DS adventures simply because another unique Zelda game made the list.



Lovin' Layton

I just finished playing Professor Layton and the Unwound Future, and I have to say that it had the [*sniff*] saddest ending I've [*sniff*] ever seen! [Bawls] But I didn't cry; I just *nearly* did. Say, speaking of Professor Layton, which is your favorite? I personally love Diabolical Box. **—DANTHEMAN1119**

I'm not nearly the Layton expert that Chris Hoffman is; here's what he had to say: We like them all, but since you've put us on the spot, we'll pick Professor Layton and the Unwound Future. The first game, Professor Layton and the Curious Village, was so creative and original, but Unwound Future took things to the next level with really great characterization and, as you pointed out, a fantastically emotional ending.

Goomba Guts

Whenever Mario, Luigi, etc. stomps on a Goomba, it just collapses as if it were made of air. What do you guys think Goombas are made of? **—NARNIA4**

I can't identify exactly what it is inside a Goomba, but I can tell you that it tastes like year-old marshmallow Peeps. Don't ask me how I know this.

Here's a question for *you*, Narnia4: if Mario mistakenly ate a Goomba instead of a mushroom, would he grow bigger or just get really sick?

Challenge Me!

I recently beat Mega Man 10 and I've been playing Monster Hunter Tri for a while now—I *love* really challenging games! But now I fear that I might be tiring of Tri. (Maybe 500 hours is enough...?) Are there any other really hard, awesomely epic games that you'd recommend? **—SIR MATT**

Great question, Matt! And, what do you know, we received a great answer from Gamester31 alongside your letter:

The games that came out in late 2010 have become some of my favorites, mainly due to the difficulty of them. 007 Classic mode in GoldenEye 007, World 8 in Donkey Kong Country Returns, and Super Mario Bros: The Lost Levels have all been fun (but also very aggravating) and I recommend them to any hardcore gamer. **—GAMESTER31**

Gaming for a Good Cause

Your article on the Mario Marathon [Vol. 264] inspired my friends and I to co-found a charity group called Goodwill Gaming to raise money for Child's Play through both online and offline events. By covering an event like the Mario Marathon in your magazine, you've done wonders to help raise awareness for the Child's Play cause. Thank you guys so much. **—JOHN B**

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hey, Hoff, I fear that the worst thing is happening to me: I'm turning into you! You were asked, if you could make any game into a movie what would it be and who would direct it, to which you replied No More Heroes and Quentin Tarantino. That's crazy, 'cause I had the same exact idea! Did you also see *Scott Pilgrim* because it resembled No More Heroes, like I did? **—ANDREW W.**

The Hoff says: Honestly, when I saw the trailer for *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, I said to myself, "Self, what is this? It looks like No More Heroes!" So, the bad news is that once the transformation is complete you'll start bursting into song (usually the DK Rap) for no apparent reason and you'll spend most of your waking hours trying to get more WWE wrestler interviews into Nintendo Power. The good news is that you'll be impervious to the cold and every once in a while you'll get to shove Chris Shepperd into a vat of voracious flesh-eating squid.

My favorite thing about handhelds is simply this: where else can you find awesome RPGs? Portable systems get the best Pokémon games, plus series like Fire Emblem, Mario & Luigi, and best of all, Kingdom Hearts. —**RUFUS**

What is your favorite or least favorite thing about playing handheld games?

My favorite thing about handhelds would have to be their small, convenient traveling size. My least favorite thing, however, is also their diminutive stature. What I'm trying to say is, uh, have you ever accidentally dropped a Game Boy Pocket into the toilet... right at the same time you were using both? It's not an enjoyable experience. —**LYNN D.**

My favorite thing about handheld gaming is, well...the games! But I am 6'2" and have huge hands, so it is pretty hard for me to reach a lot of buttons without hitting something accidentally, or getting hand cramps from trying to hold the system just right so I don't mess up in a Mario game. —**RYAN E.**

Ever wonder why so many gamers have bad posture? It's because they're always hunched over their handheld in the backseat of the car to keep sunlight off the screen! Having to do so is what I dislike most about handheld gaming. —**RAGDOG**

I love how I can pull my DS out of my pocket and be like, "*Bam*—video games!" But I hate how you pull it out, and most of them are like, "*Dang*—really pixelated video games!" That is why the Nintendo 3DS will be so cool! —**WOLVERINE13**

My least favorite thing about handhelds is the fact that they are so much more addictive than console games. I tell myself that I'll only play for a couple of minutes, and end up playing for an hour. Curse you, handhelds. *Curse you*! —**I GAVE MY NAME**

Definitely my least favorite quirk about handheld games is how easy it is to lose them or the system itself. I misplaced my Nintendo DS recently, and now I'm on a wild-goose chase to find it. Tell me if you guys spot a black DS anywhere in Central Texas. —**SIRDUDEGUY**

My favorite thing is that you don't need to use your TV. My two sisters complain if I use the TV too much, so I can just pull out my DS and play video games that way. Plus, the DS library is different from the one for Wii, so I get a whole new set of games to choose from. —**BIGBRO4680**

The thing I hate about handheld video games is how multiplayer just doesn't feel the same. I mean, a game of Mario Party DS with your chums can be OK, but there's nothing like a Saturday night full of more-interactive co-op games like New Super Mario Bros. Wii, where you're all on the same screen and have to rely on—and scream at—each other to get through the level. A multiplayer game where everyone has his own screen just isn't right. —**PIPE WORLD**

I really like to play my handheld in the peace and quiet of my room instead of being downstairs where it's always noisy. Handheld games are also a great way to kill time when I'm away from home. —**JOSEPH H.**

My least favorite thing is when I have to wait to charge the battery—pure boredom! —**RENE**

My least favorite thing about handheld games? Nothing. Nothing at all. All handhelds are perfect, and nobody can say anything else about it. Good day, sir! —**SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE DONKEY KONG**

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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INTERNS **Cody Martin, David Murphy**
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BUSINESS
VICE PRESIDENT—GAMES **Kelley Corten - 650.745.9225**
VP OF SALES AND MARKETING **Rachelle Considine – rconsidine@futureus.com - 650.238.2505**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTEGRATED SALES **Nate Hunt – nhunt@futureus.com - 415.269.5408**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR **Isaac Ugay – iugay@futureus.com - 949.305.0767**
REGIONAL SALES MANAGER **Rachel Campos – rcampos@futureus.com - 650.745.9207**
ACCOUNT MANAGER **Arthur St. Germain - astgermain@futureus.com - 650.238.2571**
DETROIT CONSUMER MANAGER **Alan Dickinson – alandmedia@comcast.net - 248.792.2408**
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR **Heidi Hapin – hhapin@futureus.com**
SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER **Andrea Recio-Ang – arecio-ang@futureus.com**
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Ashley Kardel – akardel@futureus.com**

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Michael Hollister**
PRODUCTION MANAGER **Larry Briseno**
PRINT ORDER COORDINATOR **Jennifer Lim**

CONSUMER MARKETING
VICE PRESIDENT CONSUMER MARKETING **Rich McCarthy**
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FUTURE US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court,
Suite 400, South San
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www.futureus.com

PRESIDENT **John Marcom**
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FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www.futureplc.com
Tel +44 1225 442244
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NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roger Parry
CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Stevie Spring
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Nintendo Power Customer Care
P.O. Box 5770
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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

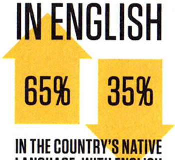
77%

of you think that Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii) is the best Super Smash Bros. game.

18%........Super Smash Bros. Melee (GCN)
5%....................Super Smash Bros. (N64)

I PREFER THE **VOCALS** FOR GAMES THAT ARE SET IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO BE...

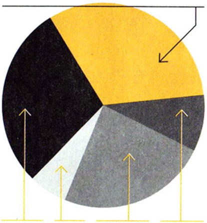
IN ENGLISH



IN THE COUNTRY'S NATIVE LANGUAGE, WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

THE WORST Mega Man X boss name is

OPTIC SUNFLOWER



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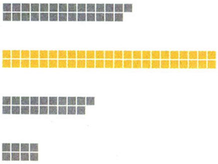


TOAD SHOULD HOST AN AWARDS SHOW

Toad 43% / Phoenix Wright 31% / Knuckles 16% / Mother Brain 10%

Which creature would make for THE BEST MEAL?

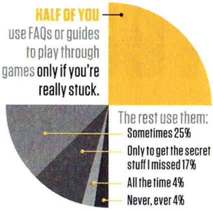
41% **CUCCO**

GRILLED with BBQ SAUCE! (The Legend of Zelda)

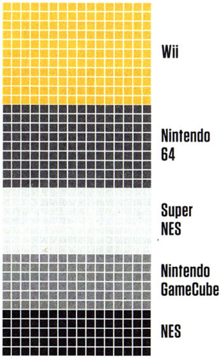
35% **Dude, that's just gross**

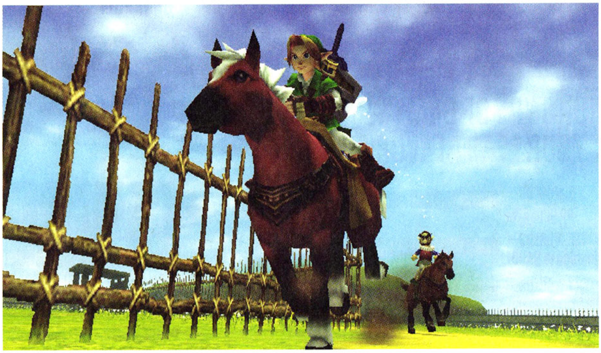
24% **Cheep-Cheep, battered and fried!** (Mario)

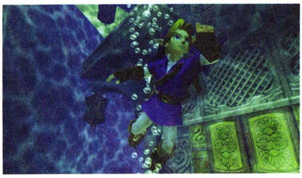
HALF OF YOU use FAQs or guides to play through games **only if you're really stuck.**

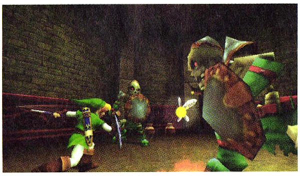


If you could obtain the entire game library for any of these consoles, which would you choose?









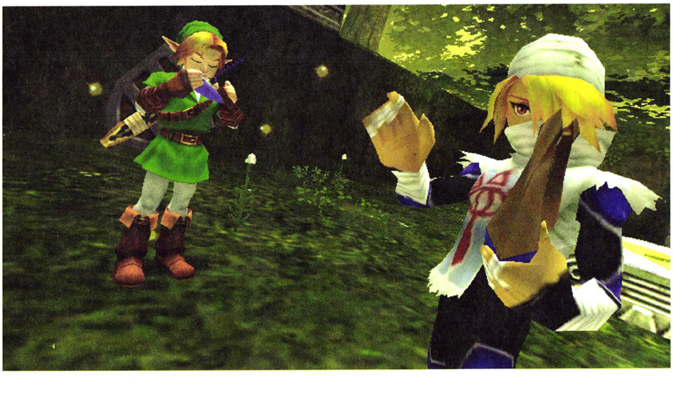
Year of the Legend

Zelda fans have a lot to look forward to in 2011.

ACCORDING TO THE Chinese zodiac, 2011 is the year of the rabbit. But if you look at what Nintendo has planned, you might also want to consider it the year of The Legend of Zelda. At the 2011 Game Developers Conference (held in March in San Francisco, CA), Nintendo president Satoru Iwata ran down a number of happenings that will undoubtedly have every Zelda fan readying his Master Sword.

Most immediate is the arrival of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, which is tentatively planned for a June release in North America for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. If you've been following our coverage of the game, then you already know that this remake of the beloved Nintendo 64 classic adds enhanced graphics, 3D visual effects, touch-screen controls, and other features to Link's epic, time-warping quest to save Hyrule. Though Nintendo didn't discuss any new details about game content, they did release several impressive new screenshots of the game, which you can see on these pages (albeit in 2D, of course).

Nintendo also reaffirmed that development is proceeding smoothly on The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for the Wii console. A new video revealed a wealth of fresh gameplay details; Link could be seen swinging his sword in specific directions to unlock a massive door, upending a giant spider so he could stab a purple weak spot on its belly, chopping down a totem-pole-like enemy, hacking apart an enemy's wooden shield (and getting speared for his troubles), fitting a three-dimensional puzzle piece into an opening, tossing a bomb into a hole atop a shelled foe, and battling a high-speed baddie in a newly revealed desert environment. Other scenes seemed to show special functions of the Wii Remote controller, such as using it to balance Link as he precariously walked across a chasm-spanning rope or rapidly slashing to slice a stalk of bamboo in an apparent minigame. Some intimidating enemies were shown,



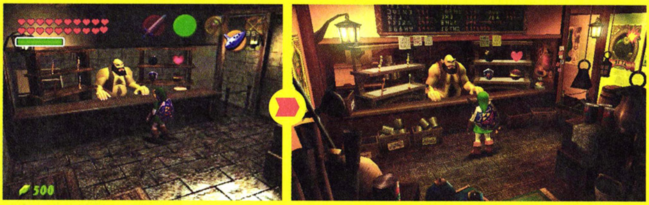
as well, including a massive axe-wielding statue come to life, and a skeleton equipped with two swords; in the video, Link quite literally disarms the skeleton—its arms actually fall off—but the skeleton is shown moments later with four new limbs. The video also raised a few new questions. Who is the mysterious creepy dude sporting white hair, a big collar, and heavy purple eyeliner who can teleport with a snap of his fingers? And what's the significance of the shield icon with a meter next to it in the upper-left potion of the screen? We expect to find out in the months ahead.

Beyond the two hotly anticipated Zelda games, Nintendo has plans to commemorate the Zelda series's 25th anniversary (which was this past February for the original game's Japanese release, and will be summer 2012 for the debut of the North American version). Although no specifics were given for what the festivities would entail, Iwata stated that Zelda creator "Mr. [Shigeru] Miyamoto is working on a plan that will allow all Zelda lovers to celebrate together."

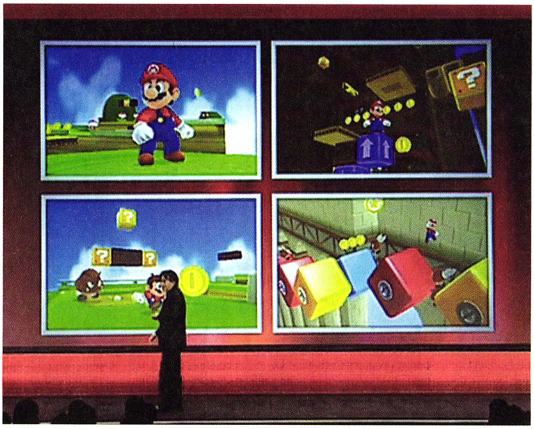
For devotees of sword-swinging fantasy adventure, the results will inevitably be worth the wait. But if you're looking for some immediate Zelda gratification, flip to page 51, where we celebrate a bit early with a retrospective look at NES epics The Legend of Zelda and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link. —**CHRIS H.**

Then and Now

These two screenshots make it easy to see the extra work that's gone into The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D. As you can tell, the prerendered shop in the original game [left; GameCube version shown] looks sparse compared to a highly detailed, densely packed, fully rendered similar scene in the Nintendo 3DS remake [right].



What About Mario?



Don't worry, plumber aficionados. Even though The Legend of Zelda is getting the lion's share of attention at the moment, Mario has some mustache-powered fun headed our way. In his speech at the 2011 Game Developers Conference, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata revealed images of and a temporary logo for Mario's next big game, which is headed to Nintendo 3DS. No details were provided (other than that the 3D visuals should create a sensation of jumping in a polygonal world that's more intuitive than anything gamers have experienced before), but Iwata made particular note of the raccoon tail in the logo, which is very reminiscent of the Raccoon Suit from Super Mario Bros. 3. (You can see the video of Iwata's entire presentation at http://gdc2011.nintendo.com.) Look for more info on Mario's next adventure when the Electronic Entertainment Expo rolls around in June.

Dragon Quest through the Ages

Creator Yuji Horii discusses the past, present, and future of the beloved Dragon Quest series.

With the February release of Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation for the Nintendo DS handheld, every mainline Dragon Quest game is finally available in North America—most of them exclusively on Nintendo systems. To celebrate the occasion, Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii made a rare visit to the US to meet with fans and press alike, and we took the opportunity to speak with him about where the series is going, where it's been, and much more. Accompanying Horii for the interview were Square Enix employees Noriyoshi Fujimoto (Dragon Quest series producer) and Yuu Miyake (senior vice president, software development, Dragon Quest series). —CHRIS H.

[L-R] Square Enix executive Yuu Miyake, Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii (and friend!), and Dragon Quest producer Noriyoshi Fujimoto.

NINTENDO POWER **Since every Dragon Quest game is now available in North America, what would be your advice for newcomers to the series? Should they start with the first game? The newest game?**

YUJI HORII It depends on how much gaming the person has done before. If the person is really a newcomer and hasn't played many games in general, perhaps Dragon Quest I would be a good one to start with. If they have a little bit of experience but are new to the Dragon Quest series, they can start with IV, VI, IX; any of them would be great.

Talking about the DS games—Dragon Quest IV, V, VI, and IX—which one has your favorite characters? Story? Gameplay hook?

YH As far as general titles go, my favorite Dragon Quest is V, and my favorite characters in that version are Pankraz Gotha and Prince Harry. Prince Harry was originally supposed to be a side character and a bully, but during early demo testing he sort of grew on us, so we started featuring him more in the later parts of the game. As far as gameplay features go, my favorite is still Dragon Quest V since you can recruit monsters as your party members. Dragon Quest V is also my favorite in terms of story. So all around, it's Dragon Quest V.

DRAGON QUEST VI: REALMS OF REVELATION

Dragon Quest VI had a mystery-filled, sci-fi flavor that was fairly unique to the series. What inspired that change in direction?

YH At the time, many games had you discover another world or another world map as you advanced through the story, but there were no games that gave you multiple maps at the beginning of the game. Initially, we wanted to start the game's story with two big worlds available from the beginning. As you advance through the story, you have to travel between the two worlds to discover different things, which allowed for a good twist at the end and will add a surprise element.

There was no specific reason why we wanted to go in that direction. We just enjoyed the factor of having two different worlds in the beginning to force the player to travel between the worlds. Using things such as a hole in the ground, or stairs—we thought that might be fun for the player. Another thing popular in Japan at the time was the idea of discovering a person's true self—who you really are as a person. This was something that inspired me when I came up with the story. In this Dragon Quest the main character has lost his memory and doesn't know who he is, and as he goes through his adventure he discovers himself—so that was a big reason.

While looking through our Nintendo Power archives, we found an issue from about 15 years ago that claimed that Dragon Quest VI was coming to the Super NES in 1996. Was a US version of Dragon Quest VI actually in development?

YUU MIYAKE Well, there was no actual development for DQVI on the SNES

NINTENDO DS
DRAGON QUEST IV
Chapters of the Chosen
SQUARE ENIX
NINTENDO DS
DRAGON QUEST V
SQUARE ENIX
NINTENDO DS
SQUARE ENIX
DRAGON QUEST VI
Realms of Revelation
Nintendo
NINTENDO DS
Wi-Fi
SQUARE ENIX
DRAGON QUEST IX
Sentinels of the Starry Skies

DRAGON QUEST V: HAND OF THE HEAVENLY BRIDE

DRAGON QUEST IX: SENTINELS OF THE STARRY SKIES

Alex
Lv 35
HP 215
MP 17
Attack
Spells
Defend
Drakularge ×1
Terrorhawk ×1
Falcon Slash
1/2
Silvia Lv 31 HP 142 MP 121
Focus On Healing
Rilla Lv 31 HP 71 MP 95
Fight Wisely
Dan Lv 32 HP 138 MP 13
Fight Wisely

for the US. When DQVI came out on the Super Famicom—the SNES of the Japanese market—[the console] was already at the end of its life cycle. Also, localizing this type of game takes a very long time because of its volume of text. We planned on localizing I through V, so, of course, we wanted to localize VI as well, but because of the volume of text and the timing of the SNES's life cycle, from our perspective we felt that it wouldn't be worth it to make a US version.
YH Since Dragon Quest VI involved a dream world, perhaps the US version was only meant to be a dream. [Laughs]

If another developer came to you and asked your advice about what it would take to make their game into a franchise that's as relevant and successful as Dragon Quest has been for 25 years, what would you say?
YH That's a very difficult question, but the most important thing is not to lose the player's trust in the series. Users always have a certain level of expectation for your game, and that expectation rises over time—creating a franchise is not as hard as maintaining a franchise. With Dragon Quest, we had to keep up with hardware changes and provide good content for the user, all while meeting the user's expectations each time. People have the perception that the Dragon Quest series doesn't change much as time passes, when that's just not true. Even though we're maintaining the ease of play for the user, we make changes to adapt to what's available at the time, as well as the story.

Speaking of which, what do you consider the sacred elements of Dragon Quest that should never change?
YH Two things: the game worlds and the ease of play. Also, the fact that the main character never has a name.

In recent years, probably starting around Dragon Quest V, it seems that the time gap between releases of Dragon Quest installments has increased a bit. Why is this?
YH Simply because it has become harder to come up with ideas for new Dragon Quests. [Laughs]
NORIYOSHI FUJIMOTO Also, as mentioned before, the user's expectations have increased over time, and it's harder to meet their expectations when creating new things such as cities.
YH For example, in Dragon Quest I, there were only five people working on that game, and it took about five months.
YM As time passes, bigger ideas come around, and in order to make those ideas come true we need more manpower and more time.

Are there any major changes that have happened during the course of development?
YH [Laughs] I'm not sure if I'm supposed to tell this, but during Dragon Quest VI development, we were thinking about making only one world near the end instead of multiple worlds. But when another game did the same thing, we decided not to. That was a big change.

Outside of Dragon Quest and a few other franchises, the popularity of Japanese RPGs seems to be waning worldwide in this generation of video games. Why do you think this is, and what can developers do to reverse that trend?
YH Something I'm curious about in JRPGs is the game world— in many other RPGs, the game world is very free and you can do many different things at once. Maybe for those types of players, JRPGs seem more restricted and seem like you can't do much. In my opinion, being able to do too much can be difficult because you can get lost and unsure of what to do next. It's easier for some people when you sort of hold their hand and help them navigate so they can actually play the game through until the end and actually enjoy it. From that standpoint, I don't feel that JRPGs are that bad compared to other types of RPGs.

Do you see any advantages to making Dragon Quest on a home console again?
YH The next Dragon Quest, Dragon Quest X, will actually be released on Wii. I feel that some users will want to play Dragon Quest on the big screen, which is why we are working toward releasing it on Wii. Of course, in the future we might develop on handhelds again, so it's really a case-by-case basis. It all depends on what the customer wants at that time. Something else we hear is that players want a new Dragon Quest that follows the same system of Dragon Quest VIII, so that's something else we're taking into consideration while in development for a Dragon Quest on Wii.

Is development on Dragon Quest X proceeding smoothly?
YH All we can say is that development is going well and we're on the last parts of the game. We can't really share much else at this point, but by the end of this year we should be able to announce something regarding it.

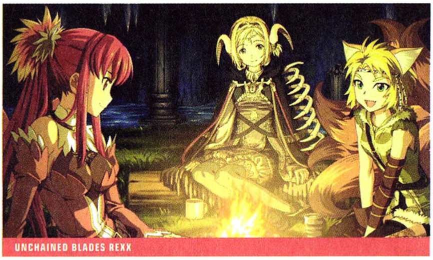
Now that Dragon Quest VI is finally here in North America, is there anything you'd like to say to North American Dragon Quest fans?
YH I appreciate the longtime Dragon Quest fans in the US. When Dragon Quest IX came out and Nintendo did the New York launch event, I did autographs for fans that came to the event. In fact, some people actually brought their copies of the original Dragon Quest, or Dragon Warrior, and asked me to sign it— this was really quite moving for me, that there are people out there that really enjoy the series and have been fans for a long time.

By the way, while we've been talking, I've been canvassing for guests in Dragon Quest IX. Am I going to find anything interesting in my system when I check it out?
YH Sorry, but I left my game in Japan. [Laughs]

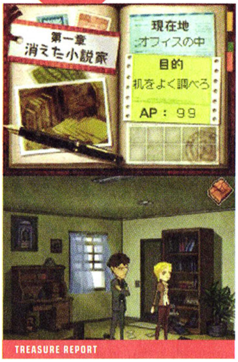
Summertime Surprises

NEWS from JAPAN

This month in Japan: The DS and Nintendo 3DS lineups add intriguing original titles while a classic-style Kirby game materializes on Wii.



UNCHAINED BLADES REXX



TREASURE REPORT

JAPAN'S SECOND-QUARTER lineup is proving to be full of surprises, with promising original titles popping onto the scene only a few months before their scheduled releases. On the Nintendo 3DS, a game titled Unchain Blades Rexx has appeared with a June release date to claim the prize of the platform's first original RPG. The game looks a lot like Atlus's Etrian Odyssey series, but with multiple smaller dungeons instead of one large one and with premade characters instead of ones players design themselves. Developer FuRyu doesn't have much experience in the genre, but they've hired on a few JRPG veterans: Grandia scenarist Takahashi Hino and Lunar animation director Toshio Arashi. Final Fantasy composer Nobuo Uematsu is contributing the game's theme song, while a dozen moderately famous character designers each contributed a single character to the game's cast.

Namco Bandai is also using some recognizable game creators to promote Treasure Report, a Professor Layton-esque puzzle/adventure hybrid for the DS. The game is written by award-winning scenarist Yukinori Kitajima (who last worked on Okamiden), drawn by Marvel Comics artist team Gurihiru, and composed by Chrono Trigger's Yasunori Mitsuda.

Finally, the Wii console got some love when Nintendo's president and CEO Satoru Iwata unveiled new footage of an as-yet untitled Kirby game during an investors' briefing. It isn't clear whether the game is an entirely new one or HAL Laboratory has resumed development of the abandoned Kirby adventure that was announced for the GameCube at E3 2005. In any event, the game seems to be a return to the classic Kirby art style and inhale-enemies-to-gain-their abilities game mechanics. —**CASEY L.**

Shiver Me Plastics!

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean sets sail for the Nintendo 3DS.

THE UNIVERSE'S LEGO-IZATION continues apace, with LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game headed to all three of Nintendo's current systems in May. As reported previously, each system's iteration will feature plots, locations, and characters from the blockbuster film franchise's four installments (the fourth of which—*Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*—is yet to be released, of course). The newly announced Nintendo 3DS version will provide notable exclusive features, including 3D graphics (of course) and Pirate Duel mode, which exploits the system's StreetPass feature to pit players against other Nintendo 3DS owners who pass within range. Participating in duels allows players to upgrade their characters and accumulate Play Coins, which can be used to unlock new playable characters. —**PATRICK C.**

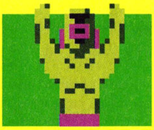
Back in the Groove

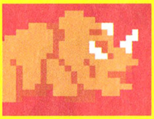
Great
Score
600
High Score
1000
8 COMBO

If you've been wondering what happened to Natsume's DS rhythm game Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove, wonder no more—the game has received a significant visual upgrade and made the jump to Nintendo 3DS. Expect supernatural dance sessions and numerous collectibles when the title hits this summer.

A WINNER IS...

The third dimension.





DODONGO DISLIKES...

Kidney stones.

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STAR POWER

A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
FINAL FIGHT
ARCADE, 1989

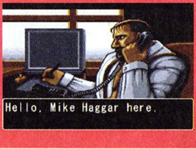
Mike Haggar

He's the only politician we're aware of who proves he's tough on crime by piledriving punks into the pavement.

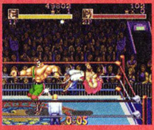
CAREER GRAPH

HIGH POINTS

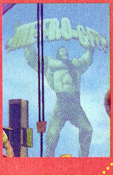
LOW POINTS


Hello, Mike Haggar here.

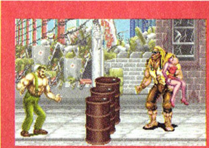
1989
Promising to put an end to crime and corruption, former pro wrestler Mike Haggar is elected mayor of Metro City.



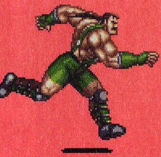
1994
Haggar returns to the ring and wows audiences with his spinning clothesline.



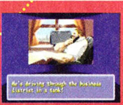
2010
A statue is erected in Haggar's honor in Metro City.



1989
The Mad Gear gang kidnaps Haggar's daughter, Jessica. (But Haggar beats them up and gets her back.)

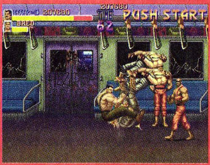


1996
Haggar's awful fashion sense becomes more pronounced when he heads into battle sporting a ponytail and spandex biking shorts.

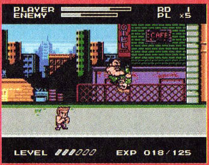

He's driving through the business district in a tank!

1996
Forced to become a background player, Haggar can only watch as Rolento drives a tank through Metro City's business district.

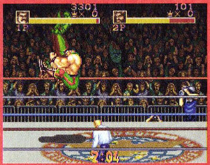
OUR FAVORITE MIKE HAGGAR GAMES



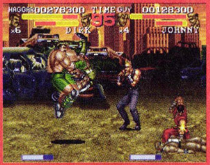
Final Fight
ARCADE, 1989
Final Fight is the blueprint that all good 2D beat-'em-ups are modeled after. The game told the story of how Haggar—along with his allies Cody and Guy—pummeled the Mad Gear gang to rescue Haggar's daughter. This arcade hit was eventually ported to Super NES and Game Boy Advance.



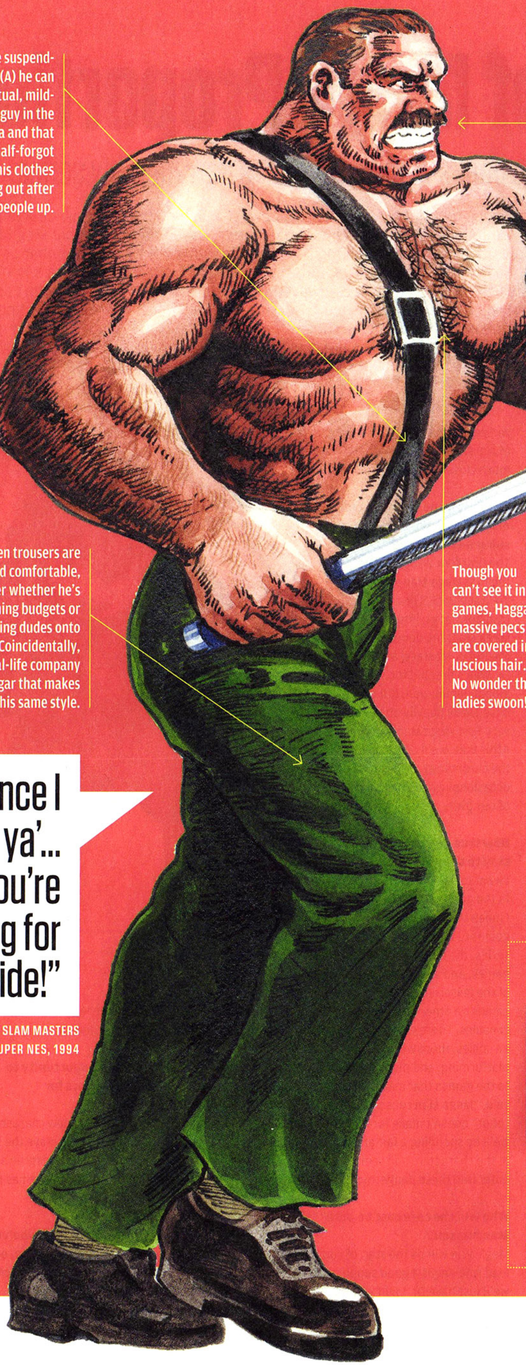
Mighty Final Fight
NES, 1993
This lighthearted NES adaptation of the original Final Fight was a fine game on its own merits, but it was especially entertaining for Haggar fans. If you beat the game with a character other than Haggar, Haggar spin-attacks the hero out of the way and takes credit for saving the day.



Saturday Night Slam Masters
SUPER NES, 1994
Using skills such as a spinning piledriver, a spinning double-armed lariat, and a powerbomb pin, Mike "The Uncivil Servant" Haggar took it to his opponents in this arcade-style wrestling game. His daughter, Jessica, often appeared to help him celebrate after a victory.



Final Fight 3
SUPER NES, 1996
Having utterly destroyed the Mad Gear gang in his previous adventures, in Final Fight 3 Haggar faced a new challenge: the Skull Cross Gang. Featuring branching levels, alternate routes, and Street Fighter-style special moves, this was more than a by-the-numbers beat-'em-up.



Haggar's single suspender proves that (A) he can be an intellectual, mild-mannered guy in the political arena and that (B) he only half-forgot to change his clothes before heading out after work to beat people up.

Much like fellow wrestler-turned-politician Jesse Ventura, Haggar proves there's nothing more manly than a lip-tickler.

Haggar usually walks around with his hands open and his arms outstretched, ready to grab and suplex anyone foolish enough to get in his way. This is especially intimidating at debates.

Haggar's green trousers are effective and comfortable, no matter whether he's determining budgets or backdropping dudes onto the concrete. Coincidentally, there's a real-life company named Haggar that makes pants in this same style.

Though you can't see it in the games, Haggar's massive pecs are covered in luscious hair. No wonder the ladies swoon!

Haggar's experience as a pro wrestler makes him well-versed in clobbering foes with foreign objects. In addition to steel pipes, Haggar is adept at using knives and swords.

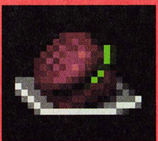
> "Once I grab ya'... you're going for a ride!"

SATURDAY NIGHT SLAM MASTERS
SUPER NES, 1994

BETTER WITH AGE

Haggar's in-game bio states that he was born on Sept. 3, 1943 (be sure to mark that as Mike Haggar Day on your calendars, kids!). That would make him around 46 years old during the events of the original Final Fight (which makes sense, considering that he had an adult daughter), and 67 today. He looks good for his age!

IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER



According to the original Final Fight, one of Haggar's favorite foods is a hamburger. He's pretty fortunate, then, that he can find fresh, delicious burgers (and many other foodstuffs) by simply punching open trash cans and other objects within Metro City. Maybe one of Haggar's first edicts as mayor was to plant the life-replenishing cuisine there to help feed the homeless.

A Comic of Mega Proportions

Mega Man returns to comic books with an explosive new monthly series.

From video games to action figures to cartoons to manga, Mega Man has pretty much done it all. Now Capcom's diminutive blue hero is ready to conquer one more form of entertainment: comic books. Based on the original Mega Man game series, the full-color monthly comic—simply titled *Mega Man*—will focus on the adventures of the Blue Bomber as he battles evil scientist Dr. Wily and his army of robotic minions. As Mega Man fans may recall, this isn't the character's first foray into comics—he briefly starred in a four-issue series published by Dreamwave Productions in 2003—but this effort could prove significantly more successful, considering that it will be published by Archie Comics (which has been creating *Sonic the Hedgehog* comics for more than 18 years). *Mega Man* #1 will be on comic-store shelves on May 4, but we couldn't wait to find out more about the titular character's exploits, so we decided to speak to the series's creators: writer Ian Flynn (best known for writing the *Sonic the Hedgehog* comics) and artist Patrick "Spaz" Spaziante (of *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Transformers*, and *Avatar: The Last Airbender* fame). **—CHRIS H.**

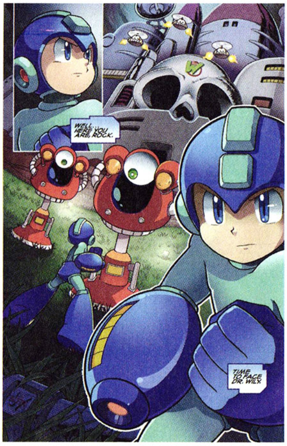
Interview with the writer: **Ian Flynn**

NINTENDO POWER What made you want to work on the *Mega Man* comic?

IAN FLYNN Come on, now. I'm a child of the '80s. I grew up on video games. Who in their right mind *wouldn't* want to write a *Mega Man* comic? In all seriousness, though, it was Capcom that approached Archie Comics with the idea. When asked if we would be interested, we responded with an emphatic "yes!"

How will your approach to *Mega Man* be different from (or similar to) your approach to *Sonic*?

The two are similar in that they're bright, colorful, and fun stories. Like the *Sonic* titles, *Mega Man* will be an all-ages action-adventure series. The differences will come mostly through the characters and how they interact. Additionally, where the *Sonic* books use the games as a part of a greater mythos, *Mega Man* will be sticking much closer to the source material.


WELL... HERE YOU ARE, ROCK.
TIME TO FACE DR. WILY.

The first issue seems to mostly be an origin issue. What will we see in subsequent issues?

The first four issues will be the first Mega Man game. We'll see Rock's first transformation into Mega Man, the debut of the Robot Masters, and Dr. Wily's first bid for global domination. It'll be based very heavily on the very first Mega Man game. After that, we'll continue to follow the chronology of the game stories, occasionally pausing to tell a story of our own.

How true do you plan to stay to the video games?

I want to stay fairly true to the games. By that I mean the 10 main games of the classic series, the Game Boy games, and some of the lesser-known games on other consoles. There will be spikes, there will be platforming, and plenty of nods to the games that made this comic possible. That said, "Mega Man runs to the right and shoots a robot" doesn't make for an engaging story, so we'll be spending a fair amount of time looking at the characters and seeing what drives them to enter into these dangerous circumstances.

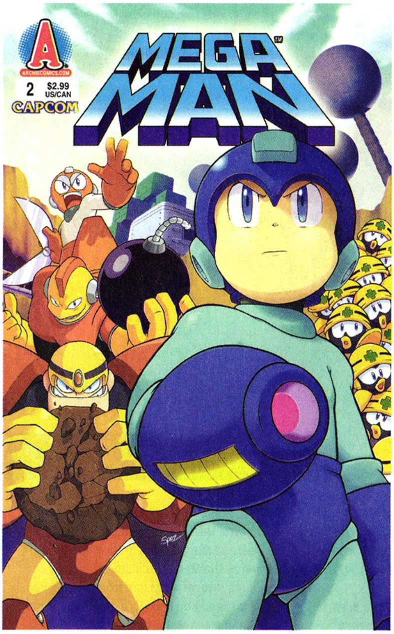
Who will the core cast be other than Mega Man himself?

Mega Man will be the star, of course, but every lead role needs a good supporting cast. At first we'll just have Dr. Light and Roll helping Mega Man, but eventually we'll be bringing in Auto, Eddie, Rush, etc.

Did you have any opportunity to create new characters for the comic?

We'll be creating some new characters from time to time to help move the stories along, but not to the same degree as in the Sonic books. The classic series has plenty of characters for us to call upon.

Is there any character that you've found especially challenging to write, or one that you've discovered to be unexpectedly fun finding a voice for?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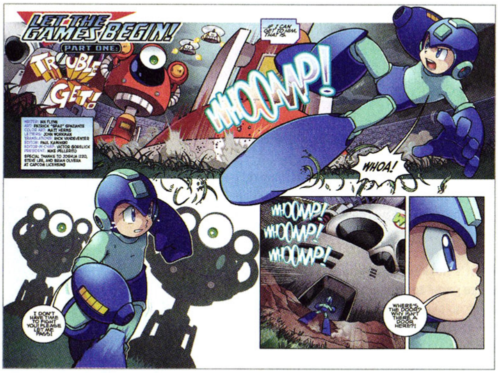
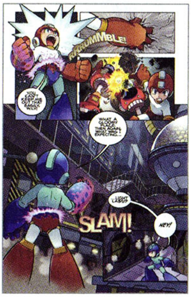
[Above] The Robot Masters make an impact in *Mega Man* #2.


LET THE GAMES BEGIN!
PART ONE:
TROUBLE GET!
WRITER: IAN FLYNN
ART: PATRICK "SPAZ" SPAZIANTE
COLOR ART: MATT HERMS
LETTERS: JOHN WORKMAN
TRANSLATIONS: RICK VANDEVENTER
EDITOR: PAUL KAMINSKI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: VICTOR GORELICK
PRESIDENT: MIKE PELLERITO
SPECIAL THANKS TO JOSHUA IZZO, STEVE LEE, AND BRIAN OLIVERA AT CAPCOM LICENSING
...IF I CAN GET TO HIM, THAT IS.
WHOOMP!
WHOA!
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO FIGHT YOU! PLEASE LET ME PASS!
WHOOMP! WHOOMP! WHOOMP!
WHERE'S THE DOOR? WHY ISN'T THERE A DOOR HERE?!


KRRUMMBLE!
YOU CAN'T KEEP ME OUT THAT EASILY, WILY!
WHAT A GLOOMY PLACE. THEN AGAIN, WHAT WAS I EXPECTING...
...LIGHT LABS?
SLAM!
HEY!

It was challenging at first to move from writing Sonic to writing Rock. They're such completely different personalities, but they're both heroes of big, flashy action. I couldn't just dive in writing for Rock; I had to sit and think on him for a while. On the other hand, going in I knew I'd have fun writing Guts Man, and I had to rein myself in on him some.

What do you want to bring to Mega Man that hasn't been dealt with in other mediums?
I don't think other projects (aside from maybe the manga) really dealt with Rock and Roll as children. Rock isn't a super fighting robot by design; he's an innocent, helpful little boy. His decision to help others as Mega Man is a rather moving gesture of self-sacrifice and I think our comic will be unique in how we explore that.

How do you feel about Mega Man developing a love interest?
I think he's too young to have anything more than a boy's puppy love. Perhaps the bigger question is, "Can a robot love?"

How much research did you have to do to write the comic?
I turned to the Internet and the Mega Man fandom's exhaustive chronicling of the series. Between the wikis and "Let's Play" playthrough videos, I think I've got a pretty good handle on all things Mega Man.

What Mega Man game is your favorite?
It's hard to say since, sadly, I'm terrible at Mega Man. The supereasy modes they've been introducing lately, like in Mega Man 10 and the Mega Man Zero Collection, are meant for players like me. I suppose my favorite would be Mega Man & Bass since I legitimately got past the opening level of that one!

Why will this series be more successful than Mega Man's last foray into comic books?
I think we'll do well because we're creating this book with two groups in mind. The first is the Mega Man fans, and I think they'll appreciate our efforts to stick closer to the source material than most other projects that came before us. The other is the general audience that doesn't know a Buster from an E-Tank, but can appreciate an exciting, entertaining story that the whole family can enjoy together.

Does the term *Monsteropolis* come up at all?
Not immediately, since I didn't like our heroes living in a town called *Monster*opolis. It's deeply entrenched in the classic-series mythos, though, so I'll figure out a place to work it in.

Would you be interested in branching out into stories that cover other Mega Man series, such as Mega Man Zero or Mega Man X?
Absolutely, and Capcom shares our enthusiasm. If *Mega Man* does well, I hope we can move on to the other series.

Why do you think the Mega Man game series has endured, and how will you translate that into comic-book form?
It keeps things simple: you have the story of good vs. evil with a cast of colorful, enjoyable characters. Anyone can jump right in and enjoy it. If all you want to take from the games is "run-jump-shoot," it's fun. If you want to get deeper into the story and characters, that's there too.

Mega Man isn't going to reinvent the wheel here. We're keeping the characters just as colorful, endearing and engaging as they are in the games. We're keeping the action intense and sprinkling humor throughout. When you get down to it, the games are just *fun*, and that's what the comic will be—simply fun.

Interview with the artist: Patrick "Spaz" Spaziante

NINTENDO POWER What's it like returning to draw a *Mega Man* comic after so many years?
PATRICK "SPAZ" SPAZIANTE It's been a real treat to be able to work on the Mega Man property again. The last comic run I was a part of (Dreamwave) was way too short, and I am happy to get the chance to revisit the Mega Man universe.

What do you like most about drawing the Mega Man characters?
I have always been a huge fan of the Mega Man art style, as well as the overall Capcom aesthetic.

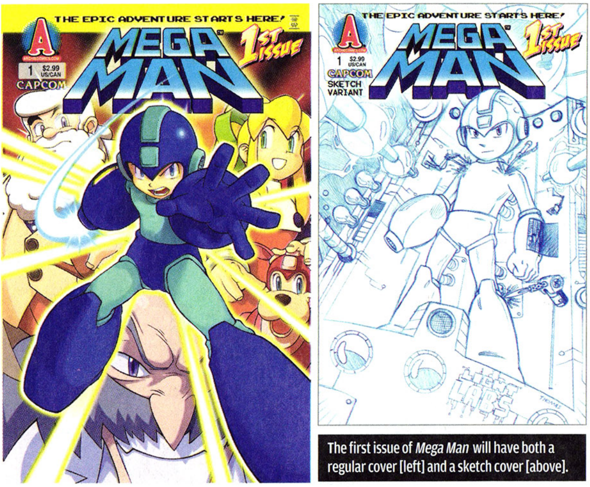
Was there anything you learned from working on the Dreamwave comic that you're able to apply to working on the new comic?
Yes. The Dreamwave comic, for the most part,

was done in a traditional "pen & ink" comic style with pages being finalized on artboard. To accommodate deadline requirements this time around, the art, still drawn traditionally, is scanned and assembled in the computer for expediency's sake.

How has your artwork evolved or improved since then?
Speaking in strictly Mega Man terms, I am definitely more comfortable with the artistic style since the [Dreamwave] days. I'm hoping that this comes across in my handling of said characters.

What's the key to adapting a side-scrolling video game to comic-book form?
In my opinion, first and foremost it starts with strength of the story. In this particular case, I feel Ian's script really captures what the fans have been waiting for. For my part, I hope I can bring a dynamic yet somewhat familiar look to the visuals.

How will the way the characters appear in the comic book differ from what players see in the games (if at all)?
From a visual standpoint, I have tried to capture the feel of the Capcom production art from the sum of many Mega Man games, hopefully bringing forth a look that the fans can appreciate. As far as their mannerisms/portrayal, I'm working hard to do justice to both the original game representations as well as the script so that there will be a smooth transition for the hardcore fans, as well as something exciting for people new to the Mega Man universe.



The first issue of *Mega Man* will have both a regular cover [left] and a sketch cover [above].

Who is your favorite character to draw so far?
Believe it or not, Dr. Wily is one of my favorites. As much as I love Mega Man, I am sure many creative people can attest to the allure of working with villains. Dr. Wily's classic "mustache-twirling" supervillain-isms are really fun to explore.

Are there any Robot Masters you're especially looking forward to drawing?
Besides loving drawing the originals, I am really of a fan of the Robot Master designs from Mega Man 2 and 8, especially Air Man, Heat Man, Wood Man, Tengu Man, Frost Man, etc., and even though I know he's not a Robot Master, Bass and his support robot Treble (who first appeared in MM7).

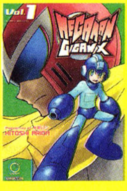
Was there any other Mega Man artist who influenced your approach to the imagery?
Many. Of course, [original Mega Man character creator] Keiji Inafune, Hideki Ishikawa [artist for Mega Man 7, Mega Man 8, and Mega Man & Bass], Shinsuke Komaki [artist on the Mega Man Battle Network and Mega Man Star Force series], and many others of the Capcom staff, as well as the Mega Man manga illustrators, including Hitoshi Ariga [creator of *Mega Man Megamix*] and Koji Izuki [creator of the *Mega Man 7* and *Mega Man 8* manga].

What's the hardest part about working on *Mega Man*?
I'd have to say a freelancer's number-one nemesis: deadlines. With all freelance work, you are not at liberty to spend as much time as you want to on each piece, due to deadline schedules, and the key is to try to find the right balance between art and time constraints.

How is working on Mega Man different from drawing other comics?
Depends on which comics you are comparing it to. Mega Man, to me, falls somewhere comfortably between anthropomorphic adventures of characters like Sonic or the TMNT, and more traditional superhero-based books, with a slight anime twist thrown in for good measure.

Are there going to be any "Easter eggs" or anything in your art that will especially appeal to the hardcore Mega Man fans?
Oh, definitely. I encourage fans to comb the pages of the premier issue of *Mega Man* to find hidden nods to not only Mega Man, but also Capcom-related imagery.

Anything else you'd like to say about the *Mega Man* comic?
Please read and enjoy our comic. Thanks to all the fans of the Blue Bomber!



Still More Mega Man

Mega Man's new monthly series isn't the only reason for Blue Bomber fans to visit their local comic shop. UDON Entertainment recently announced that the company will be bringing the *Mega Man Gigamix* manga to North America for the first time. Authored by Hitoshi Ariga, the first chapter of the three-volume series is scheduled to hit stores on May 4 (the same day as *Mega Man* #1).

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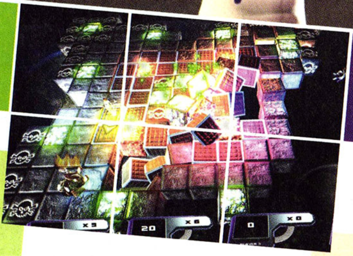

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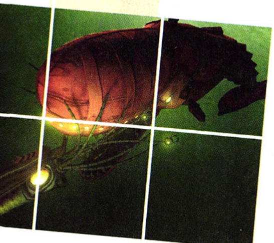

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POWER QUIZ

EASY

Throughout its life, the NES Zapper was available in what two colors?

AVERAGE

What NES Zapper game required the player to shoot a detective to make him jump?

HARDCORE

Zapper game Wild Gunman was prominently featured in what movie sequel from the 1980s?

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FIRE!!
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ANSWERS

EASY: Gray and orange; AVERAGE: Gumshoe; HARDCORE: *Back to the Future Part II*

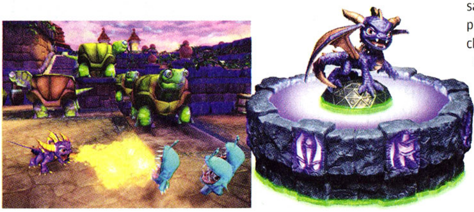
Go Figure

Action figures and video games—together at last in **Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure**.

ACTIVISION WILL CLEVERLY integrate toys with video games when it releases Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure for the Wii console this fall. The game—a 3D platformer featuring what was once Sony's beloved dragon, Spyro—will allow players to change their in-game character on the fly by placing physical toys (purchased separately) on a peripheral dubbed the Portal of Power. More than 30 characters/toys will be available, and Activision says each will offer a unique set of powers and abilities to be deployed strategically at the game's enemies, obstacles, and puzzles. Characters will be classified by elemental type—Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Life, Undead, Magic, and Tech—and each should unlock fresh character-specific content in-game.

Additionally, the toys will record the in-game exploits of their owners. As players advance, their characters will (in addition to accumulating gold) improve their stats, abilities, and attacks. These upgrades will be saved directly to the toys, allowing players to import their buffed-out characters to friends' Portals of Power for co-op and arena play.

Of course, none of this matters if the game isn't worth playing, but a story penned by *Toy Story* screenwriters Joel Cohen and Alec Sokolow offers promise on that front. **—PATRICK C.**

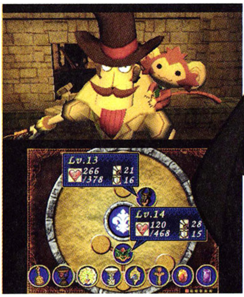


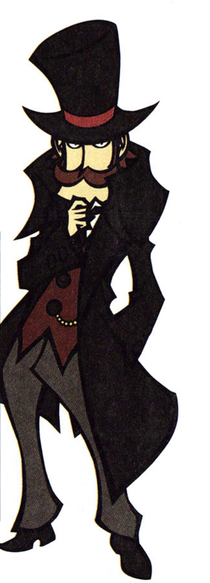
A Prescription for Puzzles

There's a new puzzle solver (with an advanced degree) in town with **Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights**.

KONAMI WILL BRING Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights to the Nintendo 3DS system this September. Set in 19th-century Europe, the game will cast players as the titular character, a brilliant, sarcastic eccentric who prefers puzzles to friends (paging Dr. House!). Spurred by a gadget bearing a mysterious map, the good doctor—aided by his appropriately perky assistant, Sophie—will search for clues and solve puzzles in a quest to locate the lost treasure of Louis XIV of the House of Bourbon. Along the way, players will be confronted by a nemesis named Vidocq, as well as the claw-wielding Knights of the Iron Mask.

Gameplay will include both 2D and 3D levels/puzzles spanning spot-the-difference, drawing, matching, and search-the-environment-for-clues challenges. Ever-increasing difficulty and a complex cast of characters round out the affair, and—one would hope—hold potential for elevating Konami's effort beyond its Professor Layton trappings. **—PATRICK C.**

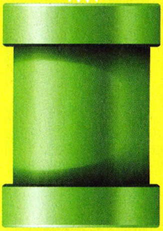




WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

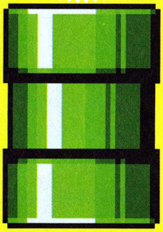
5 YEARS AGO



METROID PRIME HUNTERS
NINTENDO DS

More than a year after the First Hunt demo was released at the Nintendo DS system's launch, Metroid Prime Hunters finally arrived in early 2006; in celebration, Nintendo Power Vol. 202 featured an extensive cover feature on Samus's latest adventure. The issue also contained an interview with New Super Mario Bros. producer Takashi Tezuka, the first look at the DS Lite, strategy articles on Tales of Phantasia and Drill Dozer, and Steve Thomason's mugshot.

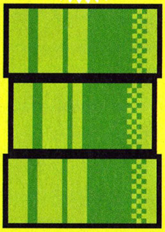
10 YEARS AGO

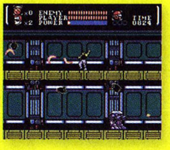


ZELDA-PREVIEW 2
NINTENDO POWER
GAME BOY ADVANCE ARRIVES!

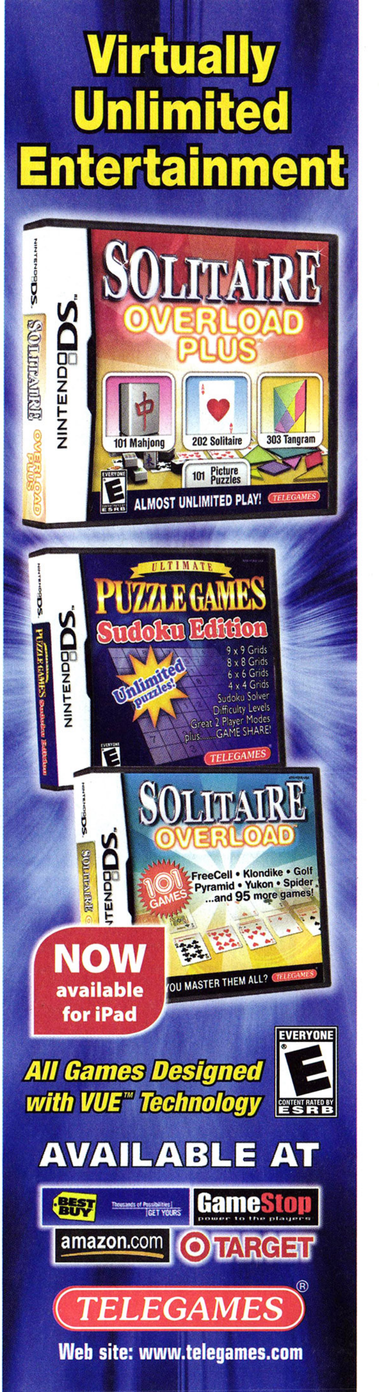
It's one thing to see an exciting new game system on the cover of a magazine, but it's another thing to see that system flying in from outer space—that's when you know things are serious. In preparation of its impending release, the Game Boy Advance attained atmospheric reentry in the April 2001 issue of Nintendo Power, along with previews of games such as Super Mario Advance and F-Zero: Maximum Velocity.

20 YEARS AGO





When a space colony is invaded by aliens, only one person can save the day: a dude with a boomerang. Such was the premise of Power Blade, a Taito-published NES game that was Nintendo Power's April 1991 cover story. As you can gather, the issue wasn't full of all-time classics, but several memorable games were represented, including S.C.A.T. (now available on Virtual Console), WWF Superstars, R-Type, and Totally Rad (which is memorable for not actually being rad at all).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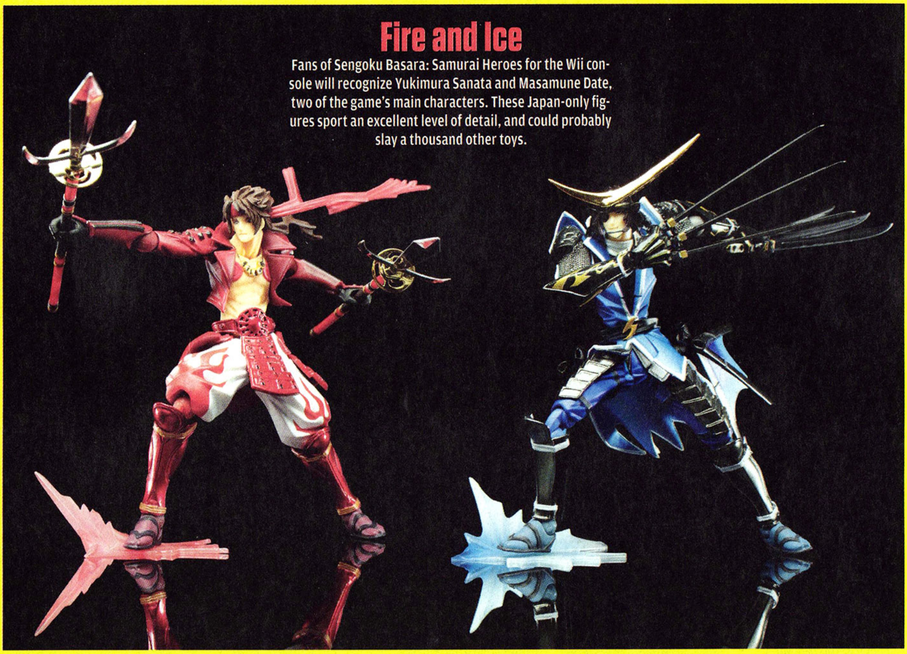
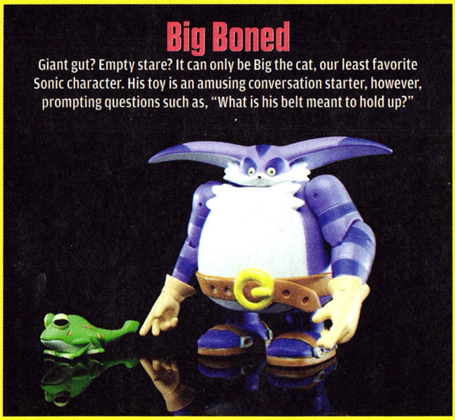


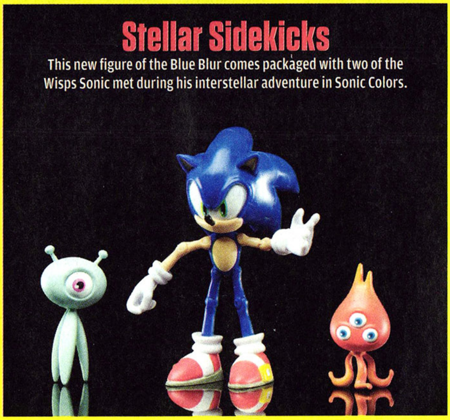
Fire and Ice

Fans of Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes for the Wii console will recognize Yukimura Sanata and Masamune Date, two of the game's main characters. These Japan-only figures sport an excellent level of detail, and could probably slay a thousand other toys.



Big Boned

Giant gut? Empty stare? It can only be Big the cat, our least favorite Sonic character. His toy is an amusing conversation starter, however, prompting questions such as, "What is his belt meant to hold up?"



Stellar Sidekicks

This new figure of the Blue Blur comes packaged with two of the Wisps Sonic met during his interstellar adventure in Sonic Colors.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

GAME FORECAST

Wii

Title	Publisher	Date
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	7/11
Cars 2: The Video Game	THQ	SUM 11
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	Crave	HOL 11
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	2011
Enclave: Shadows of Twilight	TopWare	TBA
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	6/11
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Jimmie Johnson's Anything with an Engine	Autumn	2011
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	2011
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	Disney	5/11
Man vs. Wild	Crave	4/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rio	THQ	4/11
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	2011
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	Activision	Q3 11
The Smurfs	Ubisoft	8/11
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Thor: God of Thunder	Sega	5/11
TrackMania Wii	City	SPR 11
Transformers: Dark of the Moon	Activision	7/11
Virtua Tennis 4	Sega	5/11

NINTENDO DS

Title	Publisher	Date
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	7/11
Cars 2: The Video Game	THQ	SUM 11
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	6/11
LEGO Battles: Ninjago	Warner Bros.	4/11
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	Disney	5/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Rio	THQ	4/11
The Smurfs	Ubisoft	8/11
Thor: God of Thunder	Sega	5/11
TrackMania Turbo	City	SPR 11
Transformers: Dark of the Moon	Activision	7/11

NINTENDO 3DS

Title	Publisher	Date
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Assassin's Creed: Lost Legacy	Ubisoft	TBA
Baseball*	Konami	TBA
Batman*	Warner Bros.	TBA
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 2	Aksys	SPR 11
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Bokujyoumonogatari 3D*	Marvelous	TBA
Bomberman*	Hudson	FALL 11
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Brunswick Pro Bowling	Crave	TBA
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	Crave	5/11
Cave Story 3D	NIS America	SUM 11
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
Crush 3D	Sega	TBA
cubic ninja	AQ	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dead or Alive Dimensions	Tecmo Koei	SPR 11
Deca Sports Extreme	Hudson	SUM 11
DJ Hero 3D	Activision	TBA
Dr. Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	Konami	SUM 11
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Dream Trigger 3D	D3Publisher	SPR 11
Driver Renegade	Ubisoft	Q2 11
Dual Pen Sports	Namco Bandai	2011
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Face Kart: Photo Finish	Majesco	2011
FIFA Soccer*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Frogger*	Konami	TBA
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove	Natsume	2011
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	Ubisoft	SPR 11
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	2011
Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	TBA
Kororinpa*	Hudson	TBA
Kung Fu Panda: Kaboom of Doom	THQ	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	Nintendo	6/11
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	Disney	5/11
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Mario Kart*	Nintendo	TBA
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	TBA
Mega Man Legends 3	Capcom	TBA
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	Konami	TBA
Naruto Shippuden Action*	Tomy	TBA
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle*	Hudson	FALL 11
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions	Namco Bandai	SUM 11
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	TBA
Pet Zombies in 3D	Majesco	2011
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	Crave	TBA
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puss N Boots	THQ	TBA
Rabbids Travel in Time	Ubisoft	SPR 11
Reel Fishing Paradise 3D	Natsume	SPR 11
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	Capcom	SUM 11
Resident Evil: Revelations	Capcom	TBA
Saints Row: Drive-By	THQ	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	Atlus	2011
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
Sonic*	Sega	TBA
SpongeBob SquigglePants	THQ	SPR 11
Star Fox 64 3D	Nintendo	2011
Super Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Thor: God of Thunder	Sega	5/11
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D	Ubisoft	SPR 11
Transformers: Dark of the Moon	Activision	7/11
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean
3. Thor: God of Thunder
4. Captain America: Super Soldier
5. Transformers: Dark of the Moon

NINTENDO DS

1. LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean
2. LEGO Battles: Ninjago
3. Thor: God of Thunder
4. Captain America: Super Soldier
5. Transformers: Dark of the Moon

NINTENDO 3DS

2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

1. Mario Kart*
2. Paper Mario*
3. Super Mario*
4. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
5. Kid Icarus: Uprising

DOWNLOAD

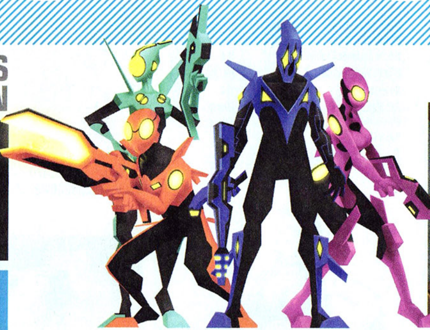
IN THIS SECTION

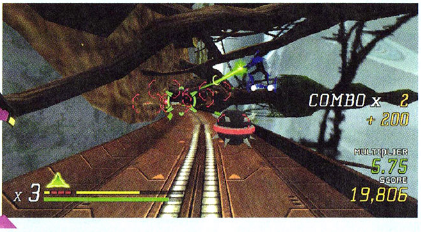
WiiWARE PREVIEW
Horizon Riders
WiiWARE PREVIEW
Motoheroz
DSiWARE PREVIEW
Penguins in Peril
NINTENDO 3DS NEWS
3D Downloads

WiiWARE REVIEWS
BIT.TRIP FLUX
JEWEL KEEPERS: EASTER ISLAND
MAGIC DESTINY
PUCCA'S KISSES GAME
SPOT THE DIFFERENCES!

VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
FAXANADU
S.C.A.T.

DSiWARE REVIEWS
101 DOLPHIN PETS
505 TANGRAM
ALL-STAR AIR HOCKEY
ARCTIC ESCAPE
BOOM BOOM SQUARIES
G.G SERIES DARK SPIRITS
G.G SERIES DRIFT CIRCUIT
MAGNETIC JOE
MAHJONG
MONSTER BUSTER CLUB
MY LITTLE RESTAURANT
OSCAR IN TOYLAND 2
PANDA CRAZE
REMOTE RACERS
SHAWN JOHNSON GYMNASTICS
TREASURE HUNTER X





Firefight on the Horizon

Arcade-style shooting gets a high-speed WiiWare twist in Horizon Riders.

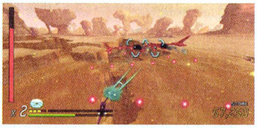
MERCENARIES GET ALL the tough jobs. Take the crew of the *DST Horizon*, for example. When the artificial intelligence responsible for the terraforming of Planet Zethos goes berserk, who does the Galactic Confederation send in to clean up the mess? Not the army. Not the flippin' space marines. Instead—since the Confederation doesn't want to put any of its citizens in harm's way—the mercs from the *Horizon* get the call.

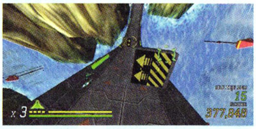
These guys aren't just run-of-the-mill soldiers, however. Each of the four warriors is equipped with his or her own hoverboard, along with a colorful high-tech battle suit and a personalized cache of weapons (including rifles, lasers, and spread guns, each with differing attributes such as power and firing pattern). If you need a few guys to race through a desolate world and blow up every rogue robot in sight, this is the crew for the job.

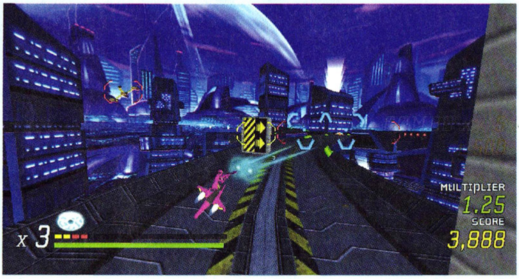
From a gameplay standpoint, Horizon Riders is a lot like a classic on-rails arcade shooter. Your character charges through the rollercoasterlike levels automatically, and it's up to you to blow away enemies and obstacles by pointing and shooting with the Wii Remote controller. But unlike in vintage shooters, you have a measure of control over your character; by twisting the remote left or right you'll move back and forth on the track (to dodge obstacles or enemy fire, or to grab health pickups), and you flick the remote to jump. The simple controls were intentionally designed for use with the Zapper peripheral, but if you want to get a bit more active, you can hook up a Wii Balance Board accessory to control character movement.

As you blast your way through 12 levels—featuring varied environments such as coastal roadways and desert canyons—you'll be rewarded for skillful playing. Precision aiming will reward you with score multipliers, which in turn earn you more experience points that power up your weapons (up to a maximum of four levels). And though point-and-shoot gameplay has been done plenty of times before on the Wii console, Horizon Riders shakes things up with some truly epic boss battles; the action gets remarkably intense as you try to keep a bead on the boss while dodging and weaving through bullet patterns reminiscent of hardcore top-down outer-space shooters.

If you're looking to sooth an itchy trigger finger, you shouldn't have long to wait. Representatives of publisher Sabarasa expect the game to be out on WiiWare in the very near future (if it isn't already available by the time you read this). **—CHRIS H.**







3D Downloads Are Coming

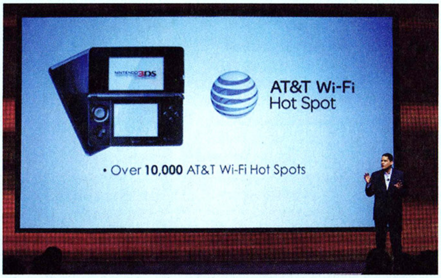
Nintendo 3DS plans for videos, Virtual Console, and more are announced.

IF YOU OWN a Nintendo 3DS system and you're interested in digitally distributed content, get ready—Nintendo and its partners will have a bevy of new features headed your way wirelessly in the coming months.

The first big update will occur in late May, when you'll be able to download a system update that includes the Nintendo eShop. The service will allow users to purchase existing DSiWare titles, as well as handheld Virtual Console games (from systems such as Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Sega Game Gear, and TurboGrafx16) and even 3D Classics—3D-enhanced versions of favorite games from past systems. (In the past, Nintendo has shown 3D versions of NES and Super NES games.) You'll also gain the ability to transfer DSiWare you've already purchased on your Nintendo DSi to your Nintendo 3DS, and get to surf the Internet via a new web browser. And just to ensure that you won't have any trouble going online to get said updates, Nintendo is partnering with AT&T to establish approximately 10,000 Wi-Fi hot spots—at restaurants, bookstores, coffee shops, airports, and other locations—specifically intended for Nintendo 3DS use.

Furthermore, Nintendo will be joining forces with Netflix to deliver streaming video content and 3D programming to the new handheld starting this summer. You'll be able to begin watching a movie on Nintendo 3DS and continue watching it on the Wii console (or vice versa), plus you'll get to view 3D movie trailers at some unspecified time before *Green Lantern* hits theaters on June 17. Additionally, Nintendo 3DS will give you access to an exclusive short-form video service (featuring comedies, music videos, and more).

And while these digitally distributed updates will add plenty of functionality in the near future, expect even more improvements down the road, including the ability to record 3D video. **—CHRIS H.**

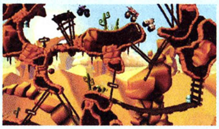


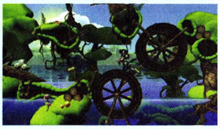
Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime explains how AT&T Wi-Fi hot spots will help you get your downloadable fix on Nintendo 3DS.

Off-Road Awesome

A test drive of Motoheroz reveals plentiful motor-revvin' mayhem.

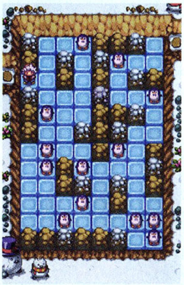
WHEN WE UNVEILED RedLynx's upcoming WiiWare game Motoheroz in Vol. 259, we were quite excited. What's not to like, after all, about a colorful side-scrolling racing game featuring wild courses and platformer sensibilities? Now we've finally had a chance to go hands-on with the game, and it's shaping up even better than we anticipated.





Two of the most impressive aspects of Motoheroz are a wealth of content (it contains more than 70 built-in story stages, 14 vehicles, 4 environments, numerous power-ups, and the promise of regularly added challenges via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection) and an emphasis on authentic physics that add to the fun instead of hinder it.

But perhaps the game's biggest draw will be Party Rally mode. Offering chaotic competition for up to four players, the mode allows you to choose the number of rounds, pick your favorite courses (or opt for random track selection), and attempt to reach the goal by any means necessary—even if it means running over your friends with a monster truck. And since courses are fairly short (most of them take only 30 seconds or so to complete), Party Rally mode is perfectly suited to quick hits of multiplayer fun. If Nintendo Power's productivity dips dramatically after Motoheroz is released (it's tentatively scheduled to hit before the end of June), just remember: it's RedLynx's fault. **—CHRIS H.**



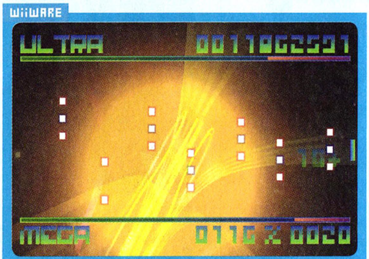
Ice, Ice Baby... Penguins

Only *you* can save the adorable baby birds of Penguins in Peril for DSiWare.

IN PENGUINS IN in Peril—the next DSiWare title from Divergent Shift developer Intrinsic Games—a flock of the cuddly baby birds have gotten themselves trapped on a grid of ice, and as a kindly Eskimo, it's up to you to rescue them. Collecting the critters is as simple as walking up to them, but there's a catch; each square of ice shatters once you step off of it, so you have to carefully plan your way through each mazelike level. As you play through the game's approximately 50 stages, you'll encounter variables such as different penguin types (including playful penguins that run from you, bratty penguins that require bribes, and fatty penguins that must be pushed) and different types of ice (thick ice, for example, can be stepped on twice before it breaks) that add extra strategy. Though simple, the puzzle-oriented action is shaping up to be rather fun. The folks at Intrinsic hope the game will be available in late spring or early summer at a value price. **—CHRIS H.**

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE



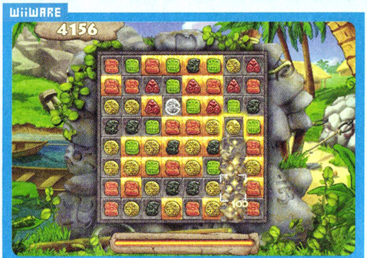
BIT.TRIP FLUX

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES** GENRE: **RHYTHM** Wii POINTS: **800**

Until now, each new Bit.Trip game has been wildly different from the last. That's why I was initially disappointed to see that the final entry in this retrolicious series plays almost exactly like the original title, Bit.Trip Beat, instead of trying something different. However, upon playing Bit.Trip Flux, you realize it is a true sequel to Beat that brings the series full circle. Like its early predecessor, Flux feels like the result of infusing Arkanoid with a rhythm game. New power-ups and deadly Avoid Beats enhance the already terrific gameplay of the original, and the Wii Remote provides precision control. As usual, the Bit.Trip experience is greatly enhanced by the beautiful fusion of music and visuals. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

WiiWARE



JEWEL KEEPERS: EASTER ISLAND

PUBLISHER: **NORDCURRENT** GENRE: **PUZZLE** Wii POINTS: **500**

Jewel Keepers: Easter Island is a grid-based puzzle game of the swap-the-positions-of-stones-to-create-rows-of-alike-stones variety. As you'd expect, creating rows of alike stones explodes said stones, and the remaining puzzles pieces fall into the gaps. Also as you'd expect, a small assortment of wild-card stones allows for board-clearing on a grander scale. This sort of puzzler is quickly becoming rote, so developers who pursue it take on a heavy burden: they need to justify their ho-hum puzzler premise with robust feature sets and outstanding production values. Jewel Keepers fails on this front; it's adequate, but entirely unnecessary. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

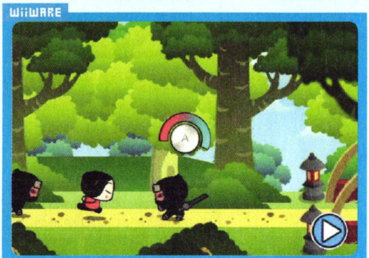
MAGIC DESTINY

PUBLISHER: **SHANBLUE INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

In terms of game content, Magic Destiny is pathetic. Although it includes nine minigames, they're mostly lame rip-offs of diversions such as Bejeweled and Whac-a-Mole. However, if you've been searching for a nonupdatable horoscope service for Wii, search no more. There are corny virtual tarot-card readings, fortune cookies, and an encyclopedia section that outlines several aspects of fortune-telling (which, surprisingly, is a half-interesting read). —**CODY M.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



PUCCA'S KISSES GAME

PUBLISHER: **BIGBEN INTERACTIVE** GENRE: **ACTION** Wii POINTS: **500**

In this twist on the "running" subgenre, you guide the adorable Pucca through each stage so that she can claim a kiss from a ninja named Garu. Instead of directly controlling Pucca, however, you help her avoid obstacles and hazards by briefly stopping her mid-dash or by executing a variety of Wii Remote gestures. There are occasional minigames between rounds, but these tend to slow down the game rather than enhance it. Luckily they're fairly short, so you can quickly get back to the "real" game. Things get a little chaotic as you progress further, but achieving the proper timing to manage it all is very satisfying. Younger players needn't worry, though, as frequent checkpoints keep the action accessible. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

WiiWARE

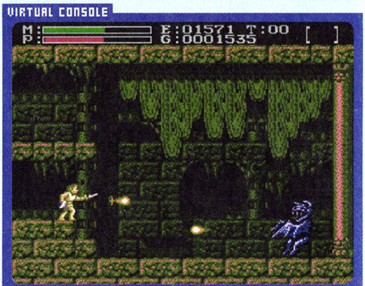
SPOT THE DIFFERENCES!

PUBLISHER: **SANUK GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Spot the Differences! certainly has an accurate title: the game requires you to look at two similar pictures and identify the differences between them. It's not exactly the most exciting premise around, but it delivers as advertised, with loads of cute photos to test your powers of observation. Other than the fact that the concept wears out its welcome fairly fast, my only complaint is that there's no warning when the time limit is about to expire. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



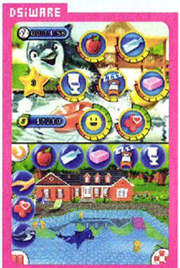
FAXANADU

PLATFORM: **NES** PUBLISHER: **HUDSON/NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1989**

With its side-scrolling gameplay and RPG elements, Faxanadu feels like the result of ripping the overhead map sequences out of Zelda II. What you're left with is a focused and challenging quest that plays very well despite some awkward jumping controls. Of course, things get easier as you continue to upgrade your character. The graphics, awash in earth tones, are actually quite detailed and set a somber mood while the excellent music complements the action. It may not have the name recognition of Mario or Zelda, but Faxanadu is one of the better titles to appear on the NES. Don't miss this hidden gem. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



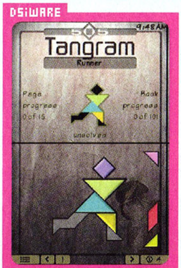
101 DOLPHIN PETS

PUBLISHER: **TEYON**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Like its shark-themed predecessor, 101 Dolphin Pets suffers from ugly graphics and a cumbersome menu system that makes taking care of your adopted creatures more of a chore than a treat. In fact, aside from the animal selection and a handful of bland minigames, it's the same darn game. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



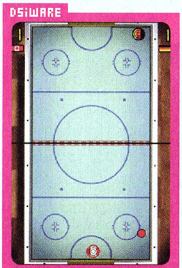
505 TANGRAM

PUBLISHER: **COSMIGO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

With a whopping 505 puzzles, this title has a lot of content for anyone who enjoys tangrams (the classic game of arranging seven shapes into recognizable objects). Unfortunately, the controls are clunky and the presentation is dullsville—especially the single music track. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



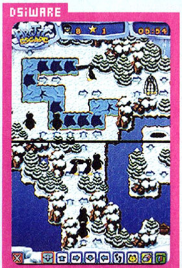
ALL-STAR AIR HOCKEY

PUBLISHER: **SKYWORKS INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

This is definitely air hockey—straight, simple, and without frills. That could be OK, except that most of the fun of air hockey comes from playing against a friend, and this strictly single-player game gets old really fast. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



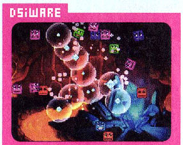
ARCTIC ESCAPE

PUBLISHER: **TEYON**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Arctic Escape plays like a cross between Lemmings and ChuChu Rocket. Using a handful of simple, icon-based commands to guide your penguin buddies to safety leads to some interesting challenges, but ugly graphics and a truly horrid frame rate make it tough to enjoy. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



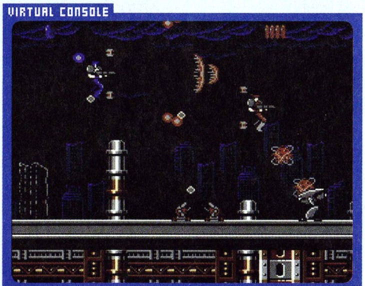
BOOM BOOM SQUARIES

PUBLISHER: **GAMELION**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The first thing I noticed about Boom Boom Squaries was that it plays almost identically to Sneezies for WiiWare (reviewed last issue). In both titles, cartoony characters float around the screen, and you have one shot (usually) to cause a chain reaction to create as many explosions as possible. Both games also suffer from the fact that success is determined by random luck as much as skill. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



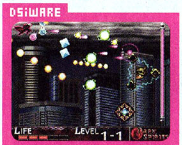
S.C.A.T

PLATFORM: **NES** PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
GENRE: **SHOOTER** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1991**

Yes, S.C.A.T. has a goofy name. It also has a silly villain (Vile Malmort? Seriously?), and protagonists named after '80s movie heroes. But the shooting action the game provides is pretty serious. There aren't a lot of surprises—shoot, dodge, grab power-up—but the graphics are decent, the gameplay is solid, and adjustable support satellites (which circle your character and allow you to fire at any angle) add a unique element of strategy. Two-player co-op brings additional appeal (and helps balance out the fairly hefty challenge), but comes at the cost of a lot of distracting graphical flicker. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



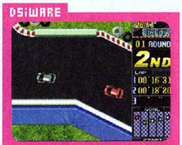
G.G SERIES DARK SPIRITS

PUBLISHER: **GENTERPRISE**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Considering that there's already been a side-scrolling shooter in the G.G Series, I was surprised to see another in the form of Dark Spirits. But that's OK—Dark Spirits delivers a unique Gothic theme along with its nonstop shooting-and-bullet-dodging action. Varied power-ups help make up for bland environments, and there's plenty of gameplay for only $2. Even so, only hardcore shooter fans need apply. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



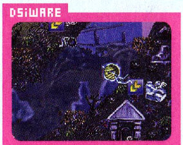
G.G SERIES DRIFT CIRCUIT

PUBLISHER: **GENTERPRISE**
GENRE: **RACING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The G.G series is great for offering fun, pick-up-and-play experiences in a variety of different genres for a low price. This bird's-eye-view racing game (reminiscent of Atari's Super Sprint), however, is bogged down with a surprising lack of speed, horrible repetitive music, and rival racers that suffer no ill effects when they ram you while you are stopped in your tracks. It's the weakest of the G.G titles. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



MAGNETIC JOE

PUBLISHER: **SUBDUED SOFTWARE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

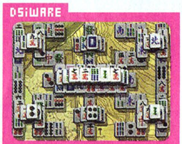
Magnetic Joe needs your help to get through a dangerous maze, but he can move only if you activate the wall-mounted magnets at the proper time. Utilizing Joe's momentum to maneuver feels right on occasion, but it often seems like you don't have any real control over your movement. This makes it far too easy to make a wrong turn into deadly spikes. If you can adjust to the inertia, though, you'll find a decent challenge. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
DSiWARE

DSiWARE



MAHJONG

PUBLISHER: **DTP YOUNG ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The simply titled Mahjong is a perfectly acceptable version of mahjong solitaire. It doesn't do anything special with the concept, but it doesn't need to. The game offers a decent number of tile designs and arrangements, and there's even a two-player versus mode that would be pretty neat if it were simultaneous instead of alternating. The presentation is solid (even the music!), and the low price doesn't hurt. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWARE

MONSTER BUSTER CLUB

PUBLISHER: **NORDCURRENT** GENRE: **ACTION** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Based on an animated kids' show, Monster Buster Club is fairly representative of games based on kids' shows...and that's not a good thing. For the relatively steep price of eight bucks you get nine alien-invasion-themed minigames. The uninspired selection leans heavily toward shooters (with some obvious nods to old-school arcade games) and offers tenuous tie-ins to the television show; for example, you can play as any of the show's four principals, but your choice has no impact on gameplay. Difficulty is also wildly uneven. All of this culminates is that feeling of "blah" that minigame collections so often inspire. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

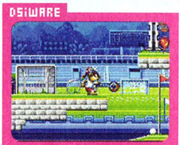
MY LITTLE RESTAURANT

PUBLISHER: **QUBICGAMES**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

At first, My Little Restaurant seems like a pretty fun point-and-click time-management game. Sure, it's a complete rip-off of Diner Dash, but at least it throws in some minigames and offers a lot of content for a low price. But then the big problem rears its head: you have to constantly move the camera. It's hard to take orders and seat customers when you're always manually adjusting your view to see what's going on. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



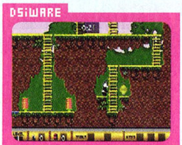
OSCAR IN TOYLAND 2

PUBLISHER: **VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

The previous Oscar games were not great. Dull play mechanics combined with haphazard level design to create sorely disappointing platforming experiences. I was hoping those problems would be remedied this time out, but no such luck—Oscar feels as sloppy as ever, with nary an improvement in sight. (It also feels like it's desperately trying to be hip...and it's 1994.) Sure, the graphics are pretty, but there are dozens of better platformers. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



PANDA CRAZE

PUBLISHER: **TIKGAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Everything about Panda Craze screams Lode Runner—you can't jump, your default action is the ability to dig a hole in front of you, and you must collect every item (in this case, Chinese-style lanterns) without trapping yourself to open the exit. That being said, and despite the shoddy graphics and occasional program glitches, it's a decent rip-off with its own minor spin on a familiar formula. —**CODY M.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

Position: 4
Lap: 3/3

REMOTE RACERS

PUBLISHER: **QUBICGAMES** GENRE: **RACING** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

As this point, the formula for awful kart racers is obvious: first, you need lifeless, rudimentary tracks that are overstuffed with race-ruining hazards; second, uncontrollable handling that detaches players from the racing experience; third, a small assortment of utterly typical power-ups that, due to faulty controls, are as impossible to use as they are necessary for victory; and last, a camera so inept that it, rather than the other racers, defeats the player. In return for all this unplayable garbage, you get to unlock a few tracks and vehicles. Unfortunately, Remote Racers sticks to the formula with horrid precision. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

SHAWN JOHNSON GYMNASTICS

PUBLISHER: **ZOO GAMES**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

A shocking number of game developers labor under the delusion that *tracing* makes for engaging gameplay. This is bat-guano insane, so imagine my surprise when I discovered that Shawn Johnson Gymnastics is wholly devoted to the act. Really, that's all you do; players perform beam and vault routines by tracing shapes. So yeah, we've got a gymnastics game built entirely on a boring, nonsensical control scheme. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

TREASURE HUNTER X

PUBLISHER: **AGETEC**
GENRE: **ACTION/PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Treasure Hunter X requires careful planning and precise movement to traverse each cavern and collect all the treasure with your explorer's limited number of moves per stage. It's a good idea that's hampered by the gap between the system's two screens and the inability to view the entire stage at will. Having limited lives in a game in which it's all too easy to get trapped (forcing you to lose a life to restart) is a pain, too. At least it's cheap. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

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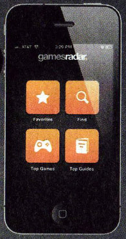
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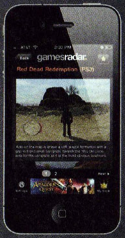
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PREVIEWS

IN THIS SECTION

Wii PREVIEWS
THOR: GOD OF THUNDER pg.40
VIRTUA TENNIS 4 pg.38

DS PREVIEWS
THOR: GOD OF THUNDER pg.40

NINTENDO 3DS PREVIEWS
CARTOON NETWORK PUNCH TIME EXPLOSION pg.39
DEAD OR ALIVE: DIMENSIONS pg.32
PAC-MAN & GALAGA DIMENSIONS pg.34
RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME 3D pg.35
SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR OVERCLOCKED pg.36
SPONGEBOB SQUIGGLEPANTS pg.35
TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL 3D pg.39

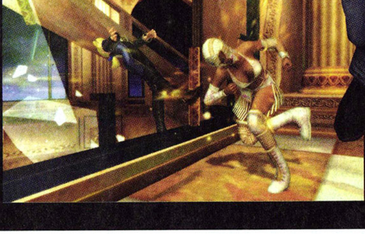
DEAD OR ALIVE DIMENSIONS

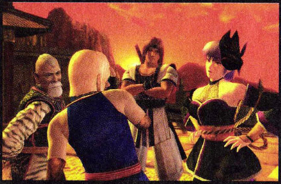
More than just a pretty face

DEAD OR ALIVE is famous for its female fighters, but there's more to the franchise's appeal than that: there's top-notch graphics, plus fast-paced and tactical combat. Button-mashing won't take you very far; you have to make use of blocks, grabs, and the series's signature reversal system in order to succeed.

Fortunately, Dead or Alive Dimensions for the Nintendo 3DS system is very accommodating to newcomers thanks to features such as the presence of a move list on the touch screen and the ability to tap on a particular move and have your fighter pull it off. Still, it's not as if DOA is *that* difficult to get into in the first place. The controls are certainly easy to learn: move around with the Circle Pad, and press X to punch, A to kick, and B to throw. Things get slightly more advanced when the Y Button enters the equation; you can hold Y (or hold back on the Circle Pad) to block, tap Y when you're on the ground to get up, or press Y and back on the Circle Pad to reverse a strike (this move is also known as a hold).

In addition to its gameplay, DOA is known for its story—more specifically, how incomprehensible it can be. Previous iterations had well-produced cut-scenes that didn't necessarily make





sense. The story mode in Dimensions, called Chronicle, takes its predecessors' story bits and adds brand-new cut-scenes to help flesh things out, stitching together a cohesive narrative. Each of Chronicle's chapters—with the exception of the final one, which we will leave unspoiled—draws from the mainline series, from Dead or Alive to Dead or Alive 4. For instance, Chapter 1: Resolve retells the original DOA's tale of runaway ninja Kasumi entering the first Dead or Alive tournament to get revenge against her uncle, Raidou, for putting her brother, Hayate, into a coma (an event that is shown in Chronicle's prologue). Chronicle determines which character you control, but because much of the mode is ninja-centric, you mostly end up playing as Kasumi, Ayane, Ryu Hayabusa, and Hayate/Ein. In case something you may not fully grasp is said in these cinema scenes, notes on the bottom screen explain who characters are or define terms such as *ninja* or *conglomerate*.

Chronicle is more than just a story mode, however; it also serves as a tutorial of sorts (although there is a separate Training mode, too). It introduces the fundamentals—the basic controls, as well as the rock-paper-scissors-style gameplay: strikes beat throws, throws beat holds, and holds beat strikes. Additionally, Chronicle teaches you some advanced techniques, but it doesn't overload you with information.

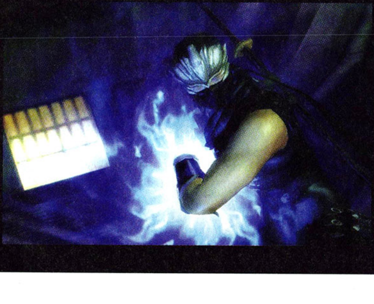
Most of the time you participate in one-on-one brawls, but occasionally Chronicle will throw you into a tag-team battle. Unlike fighting titles with tag-team functionality in which you control both members of your team (Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars, for instance), Dimensions has you playing as one combatant with a computer-controlled partner. This means the game determines when you're tagged out, when you can tag back in (you press a button when the words "Tag OK" appear), and when you can perform a double-team maneuver (a B Button icon will pop up onscreen). It certainly takes some getting used to. But those who would rather team up with a human partner—and thus coordinate your double-team moves (by having both players press B simultaneously)—can do so via local wireless in the Tag Challenge mode.

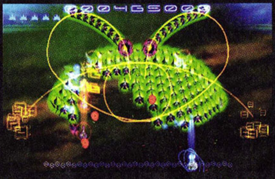
Of course, Dead or Alive Dimensions has even more to offer—including one-on-one matches (both local and online), StreetPass functionality, and unlockable figurines—which should keep you playing long after you've finished the Chronicle mode.

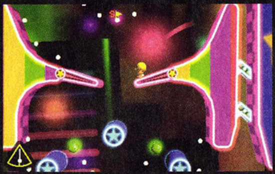
—**JUSTIN C.**

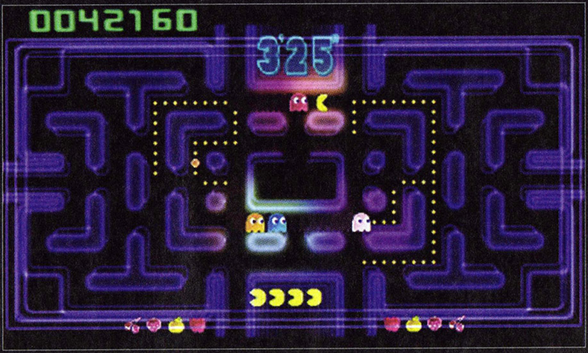
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **TECMO KOEI**
DEVELOPER: **TEAM NINJA**
RELEASE: **SPRING 2011**

Even though the ladies of the DOA series get all the attention, dudes like Ryu [below] and Bass [right] certainly hold their own.







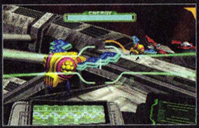


PAC-MAN & GALAGA DIMENSIONS

Now with even more Pac-Man and Galaga!

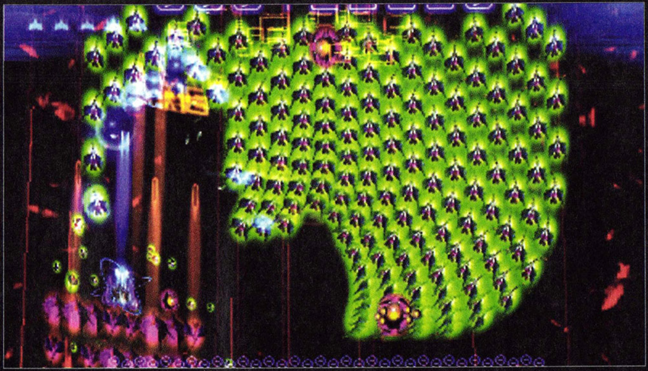
WE THOUGHT PAC-MAN & Galaga Dimensions was a good deal from the moment we heard about it. After all, you get two games in one package. There's Pac-Man Tilt, a side-scrolling platformer wherein you tilt the Nintendo 3DS to tilt the world, which—along with pinball-style flippers and plungers—grants Pac-Man access to previously unreachable areas. Then you have Galaga 3D Impact, an on-rails first-person shooter that makes use of the Nintendo 3DS system's gyros, so you physically move the handheld around to get a bead on your targets.

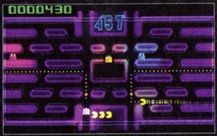
We thought that was all Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions had to offer, but It turns out we're getting twice as much value, as this title also includes Pac-Man Championship Edition and Galaga Legions (which were originally released on Xbox 360). Pac-Man Championship Edition is a techno-infused version of the classic Pac-Man with a gameplay twist. Instead of trying to last as long as possible, your goal is to earn as many points as you can—by consuming Pac-Dots and ghosts—within a 5- or 10-minute time limit. The neon-lit Galaga Legions, too, puts a unique spin on the traditional Galaga experience. To dispatch the insectoid hordes, you have a ship that can only shoot upward, as well as two satellites that can shoot and be positioned in any direction and on any location on the battlefield. Being on Nintendo 3DS, both Pac-Man Championship Edition and Galaga Legions now make use of the 3D effect; a train of 3D numbers (the points you're accruing) follows Pac-Man as he chomps on Pac-Dots, for example.



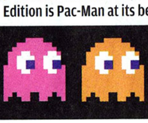
The inclusion of these two titles has increased our interest in Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions exponentially. Look for more details on this game as its summer release date approaches. —**JUSTIN C.**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
RELEASE: **SUMMER 2011**





[Above] Pac-Man Championship Edition is Pac-Man at its best.

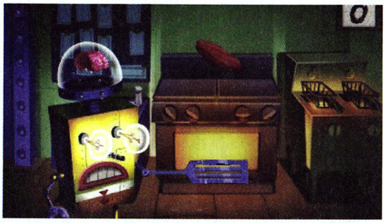


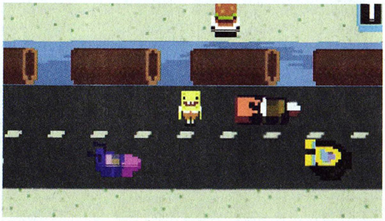
SPONGEBOB SQUIGGLEPANTS

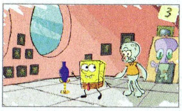
Move over, WarioWare. There's a new microgame collection in town.

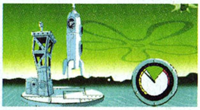
To call SpongeBob SquigglePants *weird* is an understatement. In the first stage alone, you'll play brief (as in five seconds long or so) minigames in which you squeeze a bottle of ketchup, catch falling acorns with a hat, attempt to pick matching cards, smack cookie thieves, clean mucus off a statue, snap a photo of a snail, identify hard-to-see *SpongeBob SquarePants* characters, open a vault full of cheeseburgers, and more. If you think this sounds like zaniness that might give Wario a run for his money, you're right; this game is clearly inspired by the WarioWare titles. SpongeBob SquigglePants features more than 100 microgames spread across seven worlds (each featuring a different theme and art style), including a world available exclusively in the Nintendo 3DS version of the game. To top it off, the entire game is hosted by a community-theater reject in a pirate costume, who's trying to open a SpongeBob art gallery. Though the Nintendo 3DS edition won't be out until May, the Wii console version (which utilizes the uDraw GameTablet) will hit sooner; check out our review this issue. —**CHRIS H.**

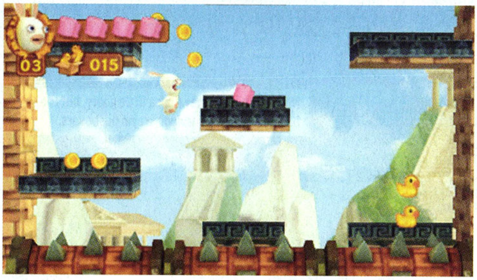
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD** | **RELEASE DATE:** **MAY 2011**









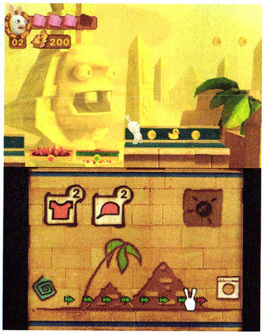


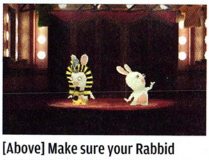
RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME 3D

Timeless action. Brainless characters.

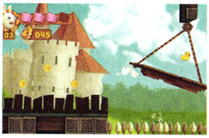
Eschewing the multiplayer-minigame formula of its Wii counterpart, the Nintendo 3DS version of Rabbids Travel in Time is a traditional side-scrolling platformer—at least, as traditional as anything can be when it stars deranged bunnies that warp through time in a washing machine and restore their life meters by collecting toilet paper. Almost everything we've experienced in the game comes straight from the old-school handbook: moving platforms, lethal spikes, bottomless pits, collectible coins, hidden passages containing power-ups or extra lives—there are even some good ol' autoscrolling stages. Although your jump button will get plenty of use, you'll also rely on melee attacks (good for smacking enemies and busting through walls) and the ability to grab and throw objects (such as explosive plant spores that can destroy obstacles) as you travel through 60 levels spanning numerous eras, including ancient Egypt and the Middle Ages. You can also dress your Rabbid in historically appropriate (or inappropriate) outfits, such as a gangster suit, a pharaoh headdress, or Robin Hood attire. —**CHRIS H.**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT CASABLANCA** | **RELEASE:** **SPRING 2011**





[Above] Make sure your Rabbid looks his best in case he lands a hot date with Cleopatra.



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR OVERCLOCKED

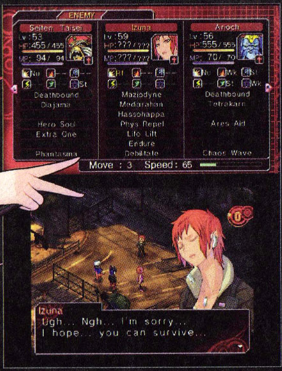
Atlus goes back to a city under siege.

THE END OF the world doesn't typically come back for an encore. It's supposed to have a certain finality to it. In this case, though, the apocalypse is worth seeing a second time, as Atlus brings out a new Nintendo 3DS version of Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor.

The new Overclocked version promises a bigger and better-looking take on the 2009 cult favorite. It was already one of the best Nintendo DS strategy games, and it looks like there's going to be a lot of icing on the cake.

For those who missed the original game, here's a primer. Devil Survivor chronicles what might be the last seven days of existence. On day one, a mysterious barrier leaps up around the edge of metropolitan Tokyo, letting nothing and nobody in or out. By day two, the city is under attack from within by rampaging demons that spring out of nowhere. During the following week, a group of youngsters and their allies do their best to discover the source of the disaster, all the while dodging the government, the army, the demons, and every other danger of a world that's breaking down around them.

The original is a notably challenging strategy sim, and its battles blaze a trail through a remarkably thoughtful story. Like most games in the Shin Megami Tensei series, Devil Survivor allows the player's decisions to lead toward

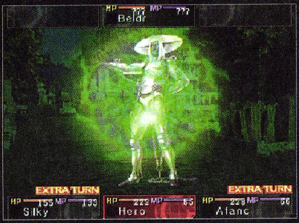


ENEMY

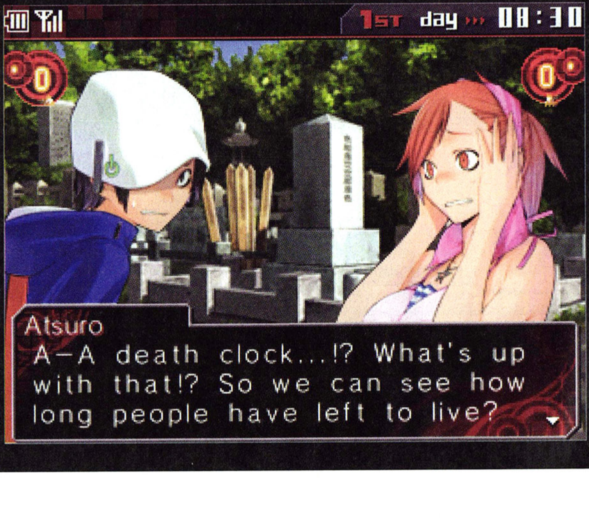
Seiten Taisei	Izuna	Aroch
Lv:53	Lv:59	Lv:56
HP:455/455	HP:???/???	HP:555/555
MP: 94/ 94	MP:???/???	MP: 70/ 70
Nu --- ---	Rf --- ---	Nu Wk St
--- --- St	--- --- ---	--- St Wk
Deathbound	Maziodyne	Deathbound
Diajama	Mediarahan	Tetrakarn
	Hassohappa	
Hero Soul	Phys Repel	Ares Aid
Extra One	Life Lift	
	Endure	
Phantasma	Debilitate	Chaos Wave

Move : 3 Speed : 65

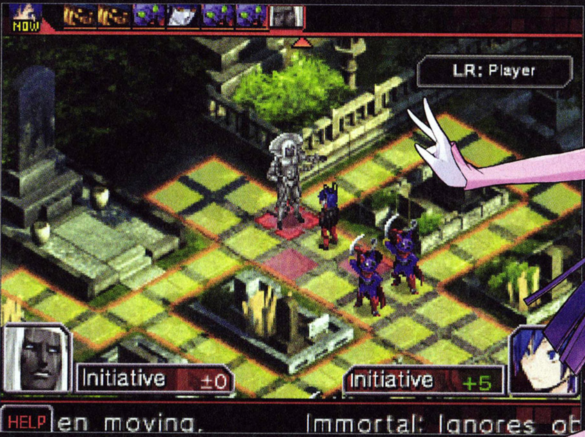
Izuna
Ugh... Ngh... I'm sorry...
I hope... you can survive...



[Above] This guy may look a little goofy, but the bad guys in Devil Survivor are no pushovers.



Atsuro
A-A death clock...!? What's up with that!? So we can see how long people have left to live?



LR: Player

Initiative ±0

Initiative +5

HELP en moving. Immortal: Ignores ot

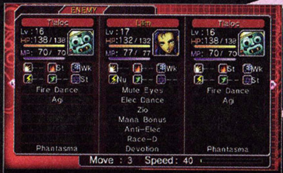
multiple endings, each of them defined by a particular moral outlook—fight to bring law and order to the world, create chaos and try to seize power in the confusion, choose a balanced path between the two, or maybe strike out in a direction that doesn't fit in any kind of rigid system.

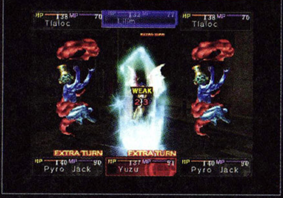
Many of the new features in the Overclocked edition go toward making the story more involving. Most of all, the Nintendo 3DS game adds a complete suite of voice acting to back up the dialogue. According to Atlus, there are more than 20,000 individual clips altogether, enough to cover every different branch of the story. That includes an entirely new chapter in the plot: a special "eighth day" that adds an expanded epilogue for players who find a way to make it that far through the adventure.

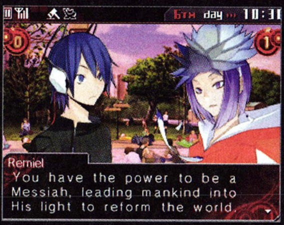
Getting that far is a real achievement. The original Devil Survivor was a tough nut to crack, even by the standards of a pretty difficult genre. Like most games in the Megami Tensei series, it involves fielding armies of summoned demons—the human heroes quickly develop the power to control and command some of the supernatural beings roaming around the city. Each player character leads a team of three demons, so battles take place on two levels. The humans move around on a familiar grid-based battlefield in combat, but when they face off against an enemy unit, the scene shifts to a three-on-three struggle between two teams of monsters. Setting up those teams to attack the enemy's weaknesses makes the difference between emerging victorious and checking out early.

Overclocked includes an expanded combat interface to take advantage of the bigger, sharper Nintendo 3DS screen—the top screen has more information to offer, and the higher resolution makes it much easier to read. That's just the tip of the iceberg as far as visual upgrades go, though. All the character artwork has been redrawn as well, and battle scenes feature revamped special visual effects.

The original game is almost two years old now, but Devil Survivor is still a rarity. It's not like your usual swords-and-sorcery strategy simulation—flashy visuals, rock 'n' roll on the soundtrack, and a modern-world setting meeting supernatural horror are not the things we're used to in a genre defined by the likes of Final Fantasy Tactics. Bringing it to the Nintendo 3DS gives the new handheld something surprising right out of the gate. —DAVID S.







Remiel
You have the power to be a Messiah, leading mankind into His light to reform the world.

COLD-HEARTED FUSION

Another time-honored system from the Shin Megami Tensei series revolves around fusing different demons to make new ones. On the surface, it's simple enough—take two demons from the collection, crash them together, and out comes another one that should hopefully be more powerful. In practice, though, this might be the most complex element of an already complex game. Devil Survivor Overclocked includes a menagerie of more than 150 different species, and individual examples all have slightly different skills. A fused demon might inherit some useful skills from its parents, and fusing the right pair of demons can yield rare monsters with extraordinary powers.

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: ATLUS
RELEASE: SUMMER 2011

VIRTUA TENNIS 4

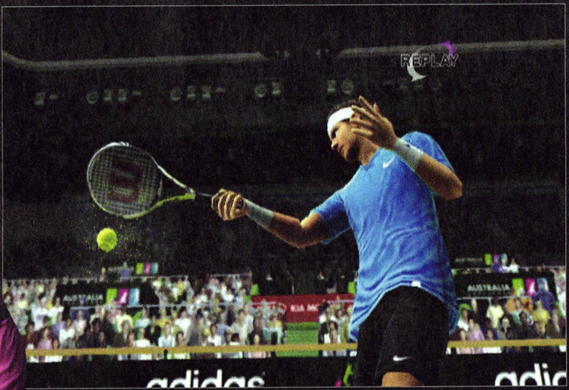
Sega serves up another arcadey tennis game.

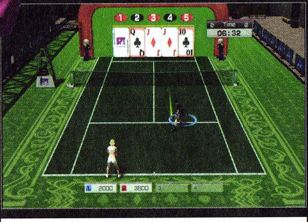
MOTION CONTROLS WERE a big part of Virtua Tennis 2009—not so much in Virtua Tennis 4. Motion controls are still present, of course, but only in Motion Play mode, where you and a buddy can swing your Wii Remote controllers like tennis rackets. (You can also attach the Wii MotionPlus accessory to the remotes for extra precision, or use Wii Remote Plus controllers with the added precision built in.) Swinging is all you really have to focus on in this mode, as your character moves automatically. But the bulk of Virtua Tennis 4 is controlled by holding the Wii Remote horizontally for NES-style controls.

You can choose from four different button layouts; the default one has you moving your player around the court with the Control Pad, slicing with 1, using top spin with 2, lobbing with B, and executing a Super Shot with A. This Super Shot makes use of the new Match Momentum meter. See, characters—either real-life tennis pros or custom creations—have certain strengths. Andy Murray has a strong backhand, for example, so hitting backhand shots helps fill the Match Momentum gauge. Once it's full, you can unleash a Super Shot: a powerful, highly accurate shot (you determine its direction with the Control Pad) that you can hit when you're in somewhat close proximity to the ball.

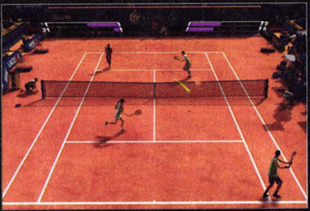
Naturally, that's not the only arcadey element in this game. Virtua Tennis 4 also features outlandish minigames (available in the Party mode for up to four players or as training exercises in the single-player World Tour mode) such as hitting clay targets that roll by on a conveyer belt, rallying while dealing with strong gusts of wind from enormous fans, or serving soccer balls into a goal. Additionally, Motion Play mode offers a one- or two-player tower-defense-ish minigame in which you defend three ancient-Egypt-themed treasures from waves of incoming mummies. —**JUSTIN C.**

PLATFORM: **Wii** | PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA** | RELEASE DATE: **MAY 2011**





[Above] We're not tennis experts, but something tells us this isn't a regulation court.



THE PROS REVEALED SO FAR:

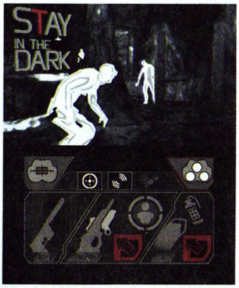
Anna Chakvetadze
Jim Courier
Juan Martin del Potro
Novak Djokovic
Roger Federer
Fernando González
Tommy Haas
Ana Ivanovic
Philipp Kohlschreiber
Svetlana Kuznetsova
Gael Monfils
Andy Murray
Rafael Nadal
Laura Robson
Andy Roddick
Andreas Seppi
Maria Sharapova
Venus Williams
Caroline Wozniacki

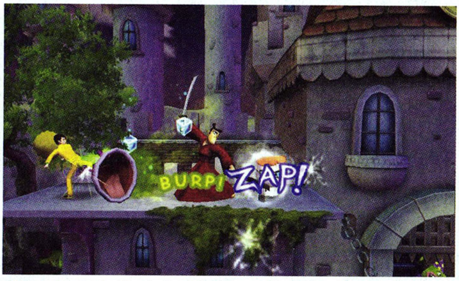
TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL 3D

A quiet kind of chaos

An enhanced version of Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory (released for consoles in 2005), Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D is a game about stealth, political intrigue, and taking out fools from behind before they even see what's coming. As secret agent Sam Fisher, you'll travel to locations such as New York, Peru, Japan, and Korea, and use a variety of weapons and gadgets in an attempt to stop a terrorist plot that could very well mean the start of World War III. An intriguing story is supported by an intriguing control scheme. With character movement mapped to the Circle Pad and camera control handled by the A, B, X, and Y Buttons, many of the more advanced actions—switching weapons, using gear, whistling to distract guards, opening doors, carrying unconscious bad guys, etc.—are executed via touch commands. The interface takes a little getting used to, but it seems like par for the course in a game with so much depth. —**CHRIS H.**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL** | RELEASE DATE: **SPRING 2011**





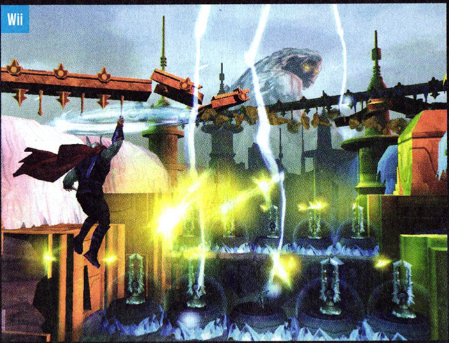
[Above] Who can stand up to the skills of Samurai Jack? Actually, a lot of cartoon characters apparently can. From heroes to villains, they're all here—even Ben 10 and Captain Planet get in on the action.

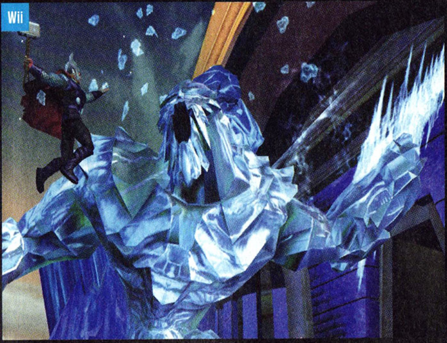
CARTOON NETWORK PUNCH TIME EXPLOSION

This fighting game will have you singing a different toon.

What happens when characters from *Samurai Jack, The Powerpuff Girls, Ben 10, The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy,* and other Cartoon Network TV shows all get together? They fight, of course. Taking a cue from the Super Smash Bros. series, Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion is an all-out four-player brawl, with 18 characters from 11 shows knocking each other silly with standard attacks, signature moves, grabs, and more. Just like in Super Smash Bros., you can vary your attacks depending on the direction you're pressing and the button you use, and your goal isn't just to drain your opponents' health bars—it's to send your adversaries flying off the screen. There are even assist characters (19 in all) that join the fray via onscreen pickups. In addition to the typical battle mode, the game features a story mode in which you'll take teams of up to four characters through 32 levels (many based on iconic locations from Cartoon Network programs) and engage in varied gameplay types, including platforming, puzzle-solving, and first-person shooting. —**CHRIS H.**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | PUBLISHER: **CRAVE**
DEVELOPER: **PAPAYA** | RELEASE: **MAY 2011**





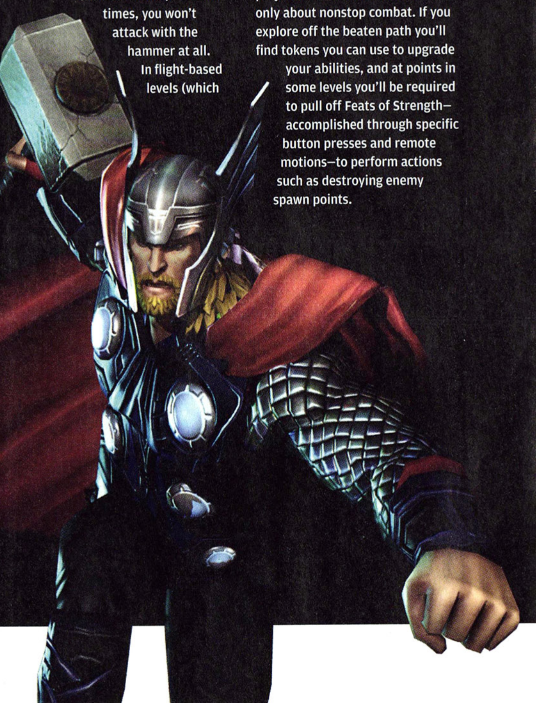
THOR: GOD OF THUNDER

Lightning strikes twice for Marvel's hammer-wielding hero.

THOR, THE GOD of thunder, has a big problem. Literally. Thanks to his meddlesome brother Loki, Thor has to face an army of Frost Giants that are invading the realm of Asgard. Luckily, Thor ain't a god for nothing. Wielding his mighty hammer, Mjöllnir, Thor is ready, willing, and able to lay the smack down on anyone foolish to get in his way—and he'll do it on both Wii and Nintendo DS.

Unlike many recent games that have shied away from motion controls for melee combat, the Wii console version of Thor lets you unleash Mjöllnir's might by mimicking its motions. Basic strikes are accomplished through a simple press of the A Button, but anything with a little more oomph requires a flick of the Wii Remote controller. Flick up to launch foes into the sky for an aerial-juggle combo; flick down to end a combo with a ground-pounding hammer slam; flick the remote from side to side to execute a wide hammer swing that nails any foe in the vicinity. Combos are a key part of the action—the more hits you rack up, the more effective your hammer attacks become and the more energy you'll acquire to blast foes with elemental God Powers (wind, thunder, and lightning).

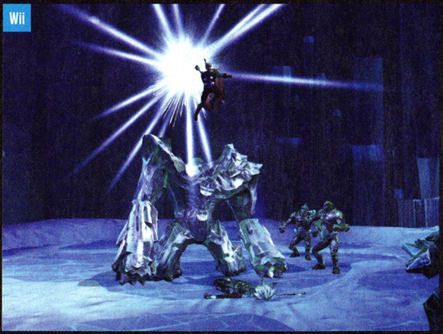
Sometimes, however, using a direct attack isn't the best tactic. In such instances, you'll probably want to crush bad guys with a hammer throw (accomplished by holding the C Button and shaking the Nunchuk controller). At other times, you won't attack with the hammer at all. In flight-based levels (which are exclusive to the Wii version of the game), you'll zap enemies with lock-on lightning attacks and use the Z Button to deflect incoming projectiles. But don't think Thor is only about nonstop combat. If you explore off the beaten path you'll find tokens you can use to upgrade your abilities, and at points in some levels you'll be required to pull off Feats of Strength—accomplished through specific button presses and remote motions—to perform actions such as destroying enemy spawn points.



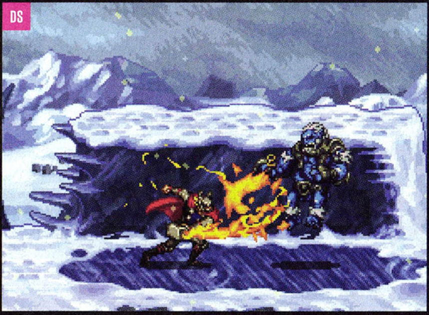
And even though you see an abundance of icy screenshots on this page, that's only the beginning. Thor's adventures take him all over the Nine Realms, from the frigid Niflheim to the fiery Muspelheim to the technologically enhanced jungle world of Vanaheim. In another Wii exclusive, you'll even travel to Midgard—aka Earth. The one notable fly in the ointment is that during our time with the Wii game we encountered some obvious frame-rate issues, but hopefully they'll be ironed out before the game's release.

On the other hand, we had no such issues with the very promising Nintendo DS version of the game. Developed by WayForward (makers of Shantae: Risky's Revenge), the DS iteration shares several similarities with its Wii counterpart: loads of action, a plethora of hammer-based melee combos, the ability to juggle enemies in the air and slam them to the ground, and the option to obliterate foes with meter-based God Powers.

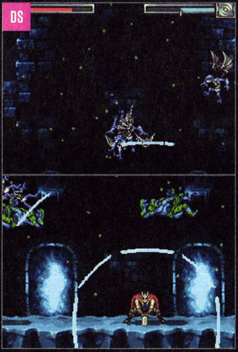
But whereas the Wii version is a full-fledged modern action game focused on accouterments such as motion controls, the DS edition is a straight-out old-school 2D beat-'em-up—but with an extra heaping of superheroic style. Not only can you easily make Thor leap from one screen to the other by pressing up or down and the jump button, but the game allows you to take advantage of Thor's superhuman strength via a dedicated grab command. Stone columns and other objects aren't just background elements—you can grab them (probably causing everything on top of them to collapse), hoist them into the air, and hurl them as weapons. For that matter, you can pick up most enemies and use them as weapons, too. One of the boss battles even required us to grab metal shards and toss them at the enormous monster's face.



As you travel the game's 18 levels (spread across seven realms, including a Hell stage exclusive to the DS version), you'll find Rune Orbs that you can attach to your hammer, armor, and helm, thereby earning new abilities such as increased hammer speed, extra damage resistance, and the power to inflict splash damage. Other highlights of the DS version include plentiful unlockables and WayForward's trademark detailed graphics and excellent animation. That's something that even Loki can't mess up. —CHRIS H.



[Above] A little fire works wonders in the ice realm of Niflheim.



PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **RED FLY (Wii), WAYFORWARD (DS)**
RELEASE DATE: **MAY 2011**

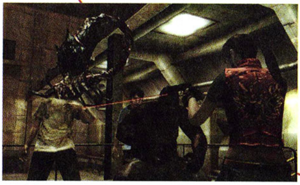
Raccoon City's finest take a break from saving the world to hunt the infected for fun and profit in **Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D.**

BY **STEVE THOMASON & CASEY LOE**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** RELEASE: **SUMMER 2011**

GUNS FOR HIRE

Capcom currently has not one, but two M-rated Resident Evil titles in development for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. Devoted fans of the award-winning series are probably most enthused about Resident Evil: Revelations, and for good reason. That game represents the next major chapter in the saga, promising an all-new story and a renewed focus on horror. Plus, what little we've seen of it looks absolutely amazing. But don't discount Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D. We recently spent some quality time with this summer release, and though it may not carry the stature of a true sequel like Revelations (which is due later), it's a heck of a lot of fun.



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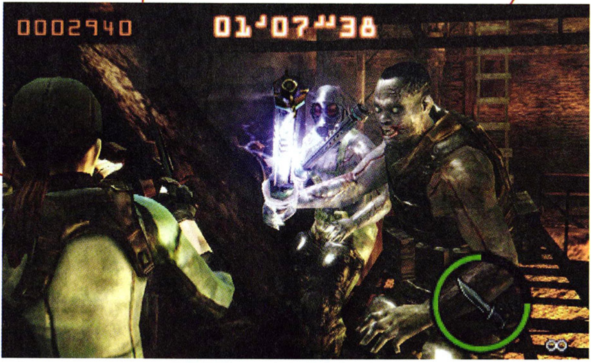

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2 COMBO

THOSE WHO PLAYED the Mercenaries mode in Resident Evil 4 or Resident Evil 5 should be familiar with the core concept here: rack up the highest score possible by eradicating as many bloodthirsty abominations as you can. There's no story to follow and no puzzles to solve; just pure, gratuitous action in bite-sized chunks. The Mercenaries 3D features remastered stages from the previous installments, as well as more than 30 unique missions, and allows you to join forces with a fellow merc via local wireless or global online play. It also boasts a lineup of eight playable characters culled from the entire series. Thus far, the known participants are Chris Redfield, Jack Krauser, Jill Valentine, Albert Wesker, Hunk, and, making her Mercenaries debut, Claire Redfield. The final two remain shrouded in mystery at the time of this writing, but we're holding out hope for human suplex machine Leon S. Kennedy, and Barry Burton, possessor of the franchise's all-time greatest beard.

SURVIVAL WAR

The key to success in The Mercenaries 3D is to become a practiced, efficient, monster-killing machine. Not only are you working under a time limit in many instances, but you earn bonus points by mowing down enemies in quick succession. Thus, learning the ins and outs of a stage—including where the bad guys appear—is crucial to preventing a lull between kills. Another way to boost your score potential is to track down the time bonuses scattered throughout each location. Likewise, you can add five seconds to the clock by stunning an enemy (shooting it in the leg, for instance) then moving in close for a melee attack. The risk of getting so up close and personal is that a foe might grab you, wasting valuable moments on the quick-time event required to break free. So despite the game's arcade-style approach, there are different strategies to contemplate. Do you pick off

targets from the relative safety of a rooftop or try to keep the clock running by getting down and dirty? In co-op mode, do you divide and conquer? Or do you stick together and master the ultrapowerful double-team move, capable of taking out any adversary in an instant?

Then there's your arsenal to consider. Each character starts with a unique weapon load-out; Chris has a pistol, a shotgun, and a sniper rifle, for instance, while Krauser begins with his trademark bow (plus infinite arrows), a knife, and a rocket launcher. You'll gain access to additional armaments, however, by receiving high grades during missions or by spending coins that you acquire. Any character can wield any weapon in the game, and though Capcom has yet to provide a final tally for the number of unlockable firearms, what we've seen thus far suggests a stockpile that would make Ted Nugent jealous. In addition, a new skill system enables you to upgrade each merc's weapon proficiency as you see fit. You'll accumulate skill points throughout the game, and you can spend them to improve everything from the firepower of a semi-automatic handgun to the reload speed on a grenade launcher.

LOCKED AND LOADED

To help you make the most of all that heavy artillery, The Mercenaries 3D introduces a new feature for which Resident Evil vets have been waiting 15 years: the ability to move and shoot at the same time! Yes, after surviving a zombie apocalypse and/or saving human civilization on multiple occasions, this elite group of soldiers has finally mastered a technique that most rent-a-cops learn their first day on the job. Here's how it works—when you hold the R Button, your mercenary draws his weapon, the camera switches to a first-person view, and you use the Circle Pad to aim your gun. If you then hold down the L Button, the crosshairs is locked into its last position and the Circle Pad reverts to moving your character. This control scheme took us a little while to get accustomed to, but once we did, mowing down infected hordes felt simpler than ever.

The game also benefits from the Nintendo 3DS touch screen, which displays a map of the area, as well as your inventory. The latter means you no longer need to pause the action to access all of your equipment. Instead, everything is available with a tap of the stylus. Alternatively, you can switch weapons via the Control Pad and use a first-aid spray by pressing the A Button. Whatever your preference, the new interface does a nice job of making the task at hand as convenient as possible.

Of course, the phenomenal visuals are likely to garner the most attention for The Mercenaries 3D. In terms of graphic capabilities, this is the most impressive showcase to date for the Nintendo 3DS hardware. It's on par with, and in some ways even surpasses, the Wii version of Resident Evil 4. Still screens can't fully do it justice. As for the 3D, it's a bit more subdued than in most games we've seen for the handheld, but that actually made it easier for our eyes to consistently retain the effect, which was still plenty impactful.

Though we came into The Mercenaries 3D with a healthy dose of skepticism, we couldn't help but be entertained. It's good, munitions-fueled fun that should keep us busy until Revelations rolls around.

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[Above] All of the character models boast impressive detail.
[Left] Hunk whispers sweet nothings into a Majini's ear.

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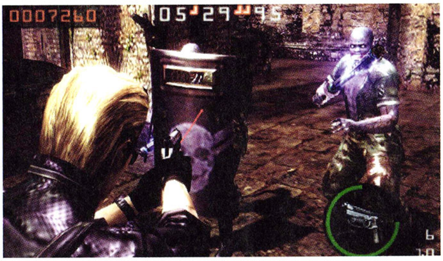
Chief Resident

To dig a bit deeper into The Mercenaries 3D and the future of Resident Evil, we recently chatted with series producer **Masachika Kawata**.



NINTENDO POWER **Why did you bring The Mercenaries over to Nintendo 3DS rather than, say, port Resident Evil 4 or Resident Evil 5?**

MASACHIKA KAWATA The decision to develop RE: The Mercenaries 3D actually came after RE: Revelations [was underway]. With the prospect of Revelations satiating the needs of a more conventional RE title and serving as the latest sequel to the franchise, we thought our second RE title on the Nintendo 3DS could deviate a little and pursue more of a pure action element. The Mercenaries features large, multi-dimensional maps, displays many characters onscreen at once, and is a fast-paced action game. This has contributed greatly to the development team's experience [with the hardware], and will indeed have a positive effect on the upcoming Revelations.

How did you decide which characters and stages to include? Is there any chance we could see downloadable content for additional characters and stages?

We've chosen characters according to their general popularity amongst the fans. Also, in addition to composing new background music, we included some old tracks, so the game should please the fans twice in this sense. Should The Mercenaries establish itself as a new branch of the franchise as we hope, we'll be looking into expanding the game through DLC, though of course we'd have to consult Nintendo regarding the specifics.

Who is your favorite character to play in the game?

I like Claire the best! It's so good to have her in an RE title again, she plays really well, and her taunt is so...her!

The game looks amazing, and we're especially impressed by how well the Resident Evil 5 environments have made the transition. Can you talk a little bit about the MT Framework and how your team was able to squeeze such impressive visuals from a handheld?

We have gone big and invested in a new engine called MT Framework Mobile for use with the Nintendo 3DS. This engine has excellent graphic capabilities and is able to draw out the system's potential to its maximum, including the hardware's shader functions. We also worked hard to exploit opportunities to improve the graphics everywhere we could. When the 3D effect is turned off, for instance, the load on the graphics hardware becomes a little less, so we implemented anti-aliasing (yes, on a handheld!) to the 2D mode. Basically, we developed this as a full-caliber title as we would for an HD console and didn't really have to hold back as we normally would for a handheld system.

What's been your overall approach to taking advantage of the system's 3D capabilities? What do you think it adds to the experience?

The level of immersion is incredible as the 3D environments seem to emerge out of the screen! Once you get used to the gameplay and are able to move the characters smoothly, it will feel like riding a roller coaster.

Conversely, what have been some of the biggest challenges of making a game in 3D?

It was balancing and tuning the level of 3D vision, so as not to be too taxing on the eyes of the player over long periods. We have done a lot of research to find the sweet spot in this regard. By default, the camera transitions to a first-person view when aiming to enhance the sense of immersion, but we have also added an option to keep it in third-person, which should cater to all tastes.

There weren't a lot of Mature games on the original Nintendo DS, but that already appears to be changing with Nintendo's new handheld. Why do you think that is?

Probably due to Nintendo being more aware of the third parties and looking to utilize each publisher's specialities rather than trying to cover all tastes on its own. As a result, a wide range of genres is represented on the Nintendo 3DS even at launch.

Is there any sort of progression in the game, or can players choose any character and stage from the beginning?

The skill system actually has a progression mechanism—there are three grades per skill. There is also a medal system through which various achievements can be viewed through the collection of medals earned. Of course, that can't be all in terms of replayability...can it?

Capcom has also announced a second Resident Evil title for the Nintendo 3DS—Resident Evil: Revelations. How is development on that title progressing?

It's going really well; thanks for asking! Because the game is huge, it's a lot of hard work, but when the weather gets a little warmer, we should be able to show you more of it.

Obviously, Revelations is a very different game from The Mercenaries 3D. How would you compare the two?

Unlike The Mercenaries, which is all about shooting action, Revelations is all about survival-horror, the very genre that Resident Evil established. We actually think of Revelations as no less than the direct sequel to Resident Evil 5, and it will be full of new, innovative ideas and characters.

This March marked the 15th anniversary of the Resident Evil franchise. Why do you think the series has been so successful all these years, and what do you think it needs to do moving forward to continue that success?

It's got to be the ever-evolving and deep storyline, as well as an ample supply of attractive and unique characters. RE has plenty of "good" and "bad" guys that just grab people's hearts, and we hope to retain that in the future.

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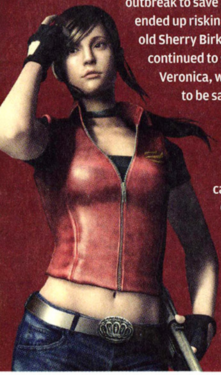
Evil Anniversary

It's been 15 years since players first visited the zombie-infested mansion on the outskirts of Raccoon City. Since then, Resident Evil has established itself as one of the most influential and consistently entertaining franchises in video games. To commemorate a decade and a half of survival-horror, Nintendo Power would like to pay tribute to the following achievements.

Best Hero

Claire Redfield

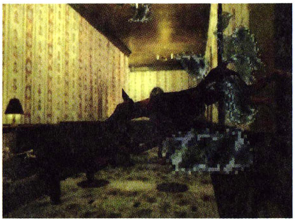


Easily the most decent human being in the entire series, Claire entered the heart of a zombie outbreak to save her dope of a brother, and ended up risking her life to save 12-year-old Sherry Birkin. Claire's humanity continued to shine in Resident Evil Code: Veronica, where she even pretended to be sad when creepy stalker Steve Burnside died in her arms. But Claire isn't all sunshine and rainbows; she rides a motorcycle, can outrun a helicopter's Gatling gun, and can shoot zombies in the head with one hand while comforting a child with the other. All the "supplements" in the world won't make you *that* kind of awesome, Chris.

Best Scare

Dog Bursts through Window (Resident Evil)

The original Resident Evil was able to deliver the best video game scare of all time by having zombie dogs abruptly leap through windows that players had been trained to believe were stationary background graphics. We see that sort of thing coming a mile away these days, but in the innocent days of 1996, when Resident Evil was inventing the survival-horror genre, this one scene elicited plenty of dropped jaws and soiled underpants.



Best Villain, Human*

Albert Wesker

It's not easy to be a menacing villain when your first name is Albert, but Wesker pulls it off with panache. Not only is he a diabolical mastermind; he's so committed to looking the part that he won't even take off his shades for an Umbrella group photo that was *clearly* taken indoors (see the first Resident Evil). Wesker's impressive fashion sense is matched only by his relentless determination. Over the course of the series, he's been impaled by Tyrant, infected with the T-Virus, and set on fire, but through it all he keeps marching toward his goal of *complete. Global. Saturation.*

*Category open to beings with at least 50% humanoid content.

Lamest Villain

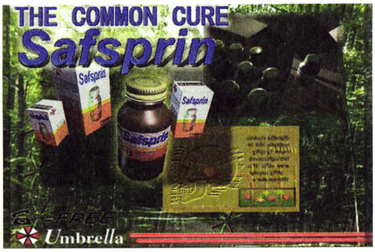
James Marcus (Resident Evil Zero)

Resident Evil Zero is often regarded as the black sheep of the series, and James Marcus is a big reason why. He looks completely out of place walking around the Resident Evil universe in his white Snuggie, and after being murdered by nerdy scientist William Birkin, Marcus is brought back to life not by some badass virus, but by his pet *leech*. In the process, he gains the power to command other leeches, which doesn't seem all that terrifying in a series with chainsaw-wielding psychopaths and alligators the size of minivans.

Best Non-Weaponized Umbrella Product

Safsprin (Resident Evil 3: Nemesis)

Sure, the Umbrella Corporation made a bit of a PR goof with their whole T-Virus genocide thing, but let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater! Misuse of aspirin causes thousands of accidental deaths each year. Couldn't Umbrella's Safsprin—"The Common Cure"— be a safer alternative? We're sure Umbrella's Aqua Cure and Adravil medicines save plenty of lives too! So when the BSAA is hunting down and killing the company's mutated department heads, maybe they could spare the guy in the Consumer Products division?



Best Weapon

Mine Thrower (Resident Evil 4)

A gun that shoots mines? *Heat-seeking* mines? That can stick in zombie heads and explode at will? Sure, a dearth of ammo always makes the Mine Thrower a bit weak in practice, but you can't beat it for style.

Best Comrade-in-Arms

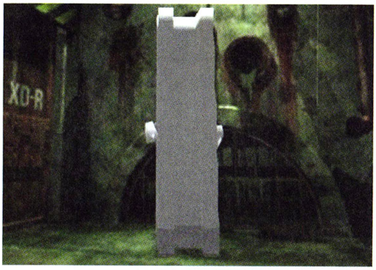
Nameless Wolf (Resident Evil 4)

Whether they're joined by mewling schoolgirls or trained police officers who somehow can't squeeze off more than a single handgun bullet every 20 seconds, Resident Evil's heroes have grown to expect nothing but game overs and goofy dialogue from their so-called companions. That's why we fell in love with the nameless wolf in Resident Evil 4, who thanks Leon for freeing him from a bear trap by selflessly throwing himself at El Gigante to give his human friend a chance to deliver the finishing blow. Best of all, the wolf then gracefully disappears without delivering any dumb one-liners.

Best Unlockable Secret

Tofu (Resident Evil 2)

Resident Evil games always have a nice assortment of goodies waiting at the end, but the surprise debut of Mercenary mode (not to be confused with The Mercenaries mode) in Resident Evil 2 took the cake. Those few who conquered the mode with new hero Hunk unlocked a second character: a squeaking, sweating, multicolored pillar of tofu named, uh, Tofu, who has to battle zombies with nothing but a knife.



Best Vending Machine

Juicy Raccoon (Resident Evil 3: Nemesis)

While we're intrigued by the Cho-Cho Cola sold in Resident Evil 2 (the flavors of chocolate and chopped liver, all in one can?), we have to show our Raccoon City pride by quenching our thirst with a can of Resident Evil 3's Juicy Raccoon.

Most Insane Raccoon City Public Works Project

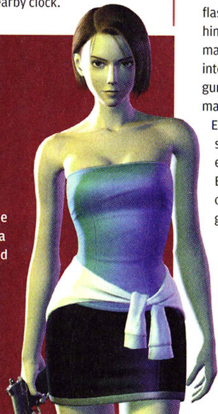
The Don M. Joe War Memorial (Resident Evil 3: Nemesis)

There are a lot of signs that Raccoon City suffered from poor governance, but none are more striking than the ludicrous public works projects in every corner of the city. Our favorite is RE3's Don M. Joe War Memorial, which consists of a statue of a horse, two *electrified* fountains, and a slot into which you can insert a statue of a book to open a safe that contains...a car battery. Not exactly a fitting tribute to Don M. Joe! Perhaps when the citizens tried to complain, they were stymied by the City Hall gates that open only when special gems are inserted into a nearby clock.

Worst (Best?) Zombie-Fighting Attire

Jill's Tube Top and Skirt (Resident Evil 3: Nemesis)

Listen, Jill, we know you had the day off when zombies attacked Raccoon City, but having already learned that the undead can inflict a lethal plague through only a bite or a scratch, maybe you want to throw on something with a little more padding than a tube top and miniskirt? A thick sweater, you say? That's a great idea.... What? You're going to wear it tied around your waist? For the entire game?!



Best Personality Makeover

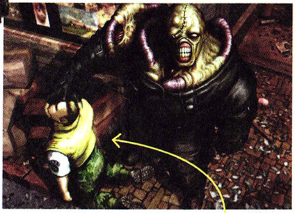
Leon S. Kennedy (Resident Evil 4)

Resident Evil 2-era Leon S. Kennedy overslept on his first day of work, moped his way through the entire game, and was easily duped by enemy spy Ada Wong after she flashed a little leg at him. Yet somehow he managed to transform into a cool, confident, gum-chewing killing machine in Resident Evil 4—albeit one who still whines about the events of Resident Evil 2, creepily hits on every girl in the game, and says things like, "Sorry, but following a lady's lead just isn't my style." But hey, baby steps.

Best Villain, Monster

Nemesis (Resident Evil 3: Nemesis)

Resident Evil 3's titular villain knows how to make an entrance. Whether he's casually turning a corner with a rocket launcher pointing at Jill's face or bursting through solid walls like some sort of deranged Kool-Aid Man, an encounter with Nemesis is always a pants-wetting experience. He's also basically immortal, smart enough to shoot rescue helicopters out of the sky, and kind of cute when he's playing with the corpses of his victims. He has only a single line of dialogue, which he repeats endlessly ("STAAAARRRRSSSSS"), but that still makes him one of the most eloquent members of the Resident Evil 3 cast.



Most Ineffectual S.T.A.R.S. Member

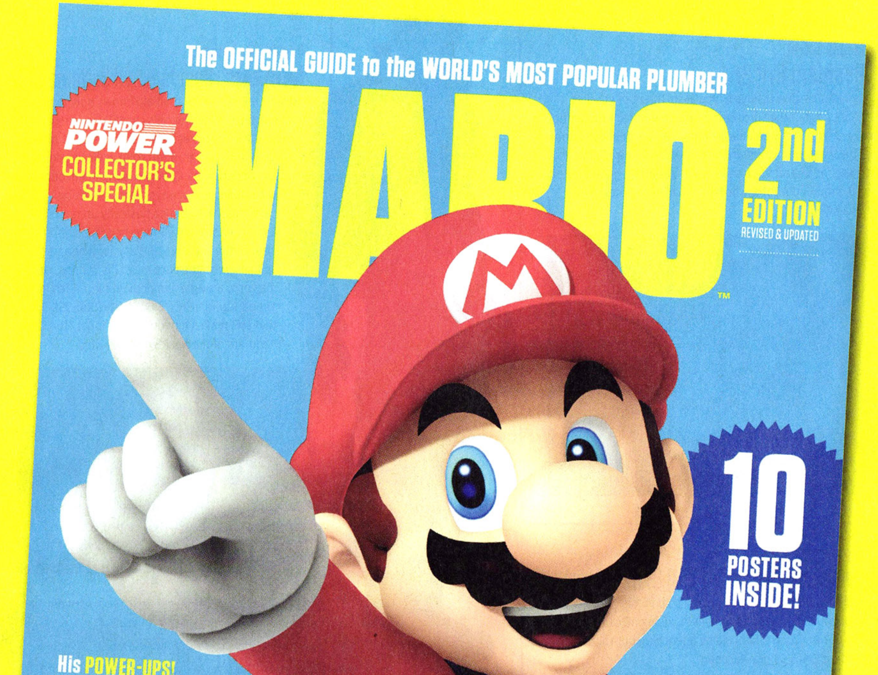
Brad Vickers (Resident Evil , Resident Evil 2, Resident Evil 3)

The elite S.T.A.R.S. unit had 12 members, but somehow half of them managed to get killed before and during the opening credits of the very first game. That's pretty pathetic, but Brad Vickers has them all beat with ease. First of all, he freaked out during the original RE and fled in the team's helicopter, leaving his friends and allies to die in a zombie outbreak. He didn't man up and return for the survivors until *the next morning*. Then he managed to get bitten by a zombie the very first time he encountered one, was put out of his misery by Nemesis, and later revived as a zombie who was subsequently killed by Claire. A garden-variety coward may die a thousand deaths, but somehow Brad Vickers managed to die a thousand and three.

Most Graceful Exit

Steve Burnside (Resident Evil Code: Veronica)

Resident Evil Code: Veronica's Steve Burnside was a cocky, corny spaz who creepily stalked the game's heroine when he wasn't too busy having emotional breakdowns. In other words, a typical Resident Evil male lead. But what sets Steve apart is that he had the grace and dignity to get himself killed, so we never have to worry about him starring in Resident Evil 6 or hooking up with one of the franchise's beloved heroines. If only Carlos and Billy had been so considerate.



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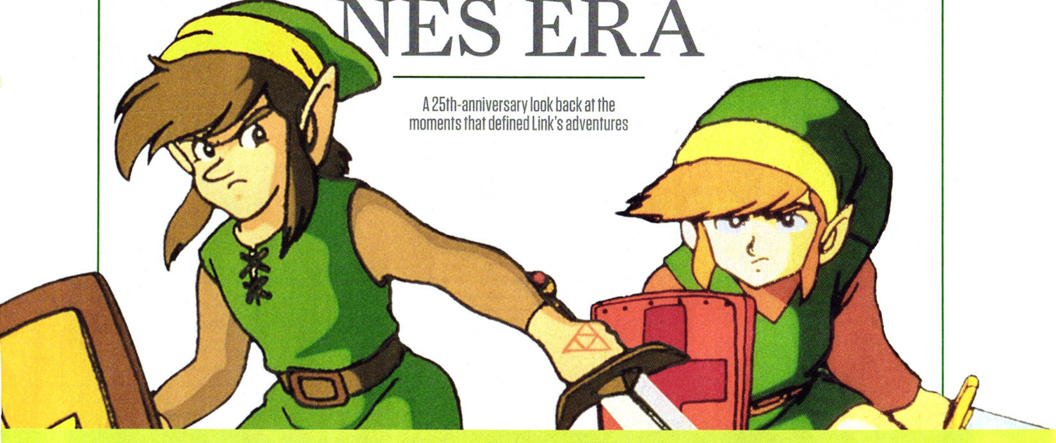
The Greatest Moments of

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

NES ERA

A 25th-anniversary look back at the moments that defined Link's adventures

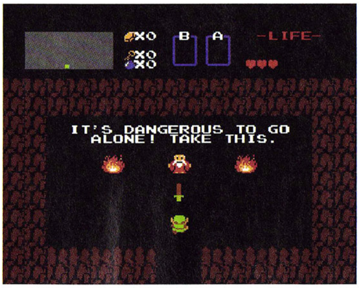


2011 MARKS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY of The Legend of Zelda, which debuted in Japan in 1986. It's hard to believe that we've been questing with Link throughout Hyrule for a quarter of a century. Luckily, the hero in green is showing no signs of slowing down. This year sees the release of two new Zelda titles: The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for the Wii console and a 3D reimagining of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (considered by many to be the best in the series) for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

In anticipation of these games and to celebrate the history of The Legend of Zelda series, we've decided to take a look back at the titles that have brought us to where we are today. This is the first part in an ongoing look at the greatest moments in the franchise, and we're starting at the beginning. Here are a few of the elements that helped define the series as we played through Link's first two adventures on the Nintendo Entertainment System.

BY PHIL THEOBALD

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

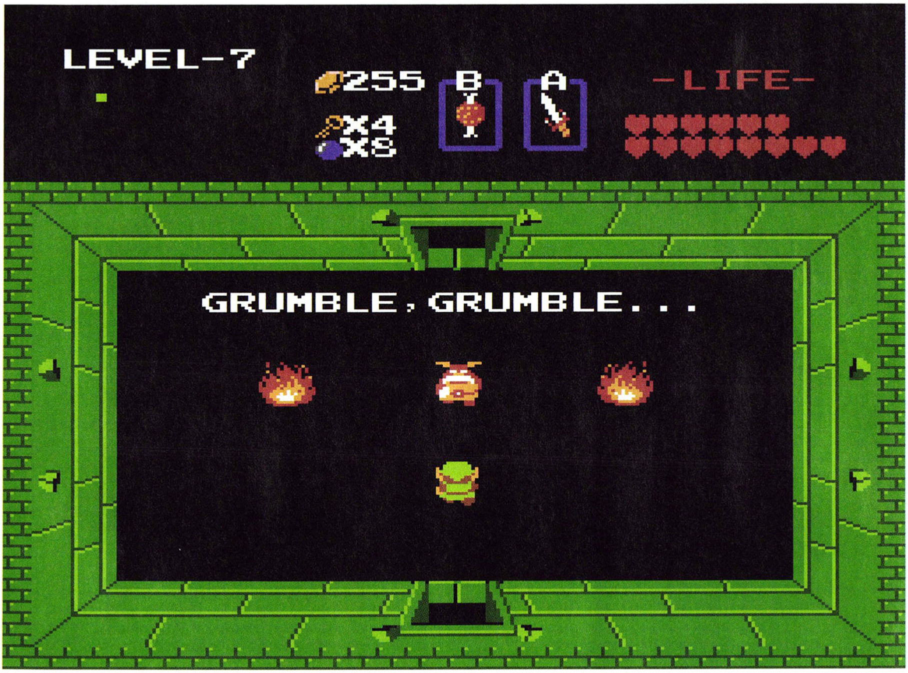

X0
B
A
-LIFE-
X0
X0

IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS.

"It's dangerous to go alone! Take this."

There are many great moments in The Legend of Zelda series, but this was the first. Link starts his inaugural game unarmed and directionless. By wandering into a nearby cave, he meets an old man who gives him his first weapon. With the old man's immortal words, the great adventure begins.

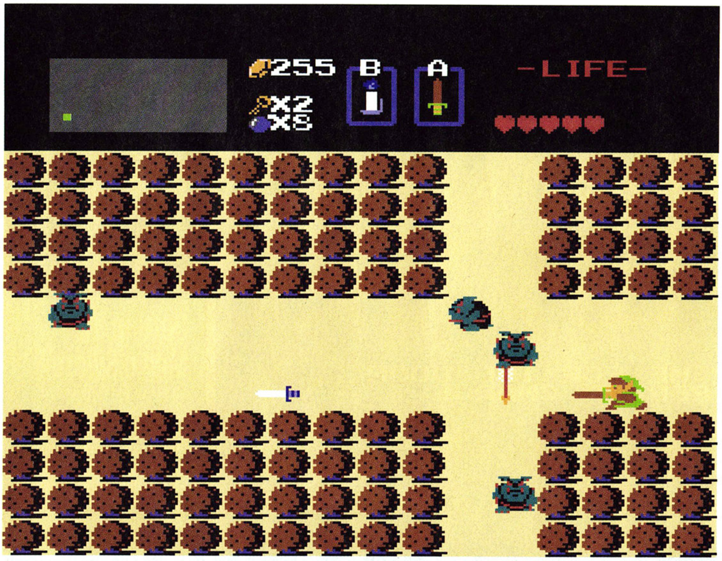
THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
©1986 NINTENDO
PUSH START BUTTON


LEVEL-7
255
B
A
-LIFE-
X4
X8

GRUMBLE, GRUMBLE...

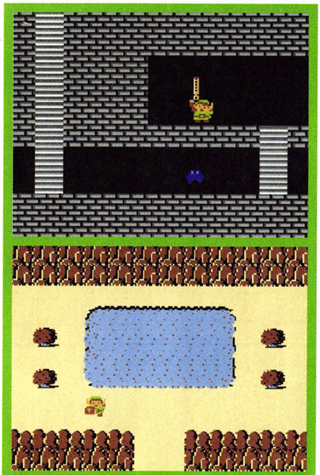
"Grumble, grumble..."

Most enemies go to great effort to impede Link's progress. Occasionally, however, one takes a more passive-aggressive approach. This Goriya won't attack our hero, but he will hole up in a dungeon and steadfastly refuse to let Link pass. The only way to get past this guard is to fill his grumbling belly with some delicious meat that can be bought at various shops around Hyrule.



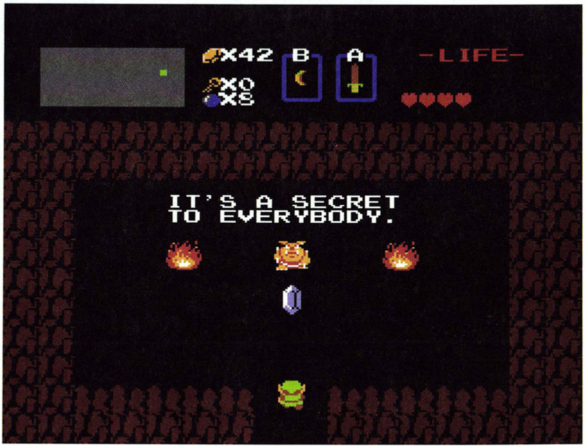
The Lost Woods

Entering the Lost Woods can be a confusing ordeal without the proper information. Unless you travel through these woods in the correct order, you'll remain trapped there forever. For the right price, an old woman will tell Link the proper route, but we'll save him some cash: to escape the Lost Woods, go north, west, south, then west.



Whistle While You Work

This whistle is one of the handiest tools in Link's inventory. After finding it in the fifth dungeon, Link can use it to warp to any dungeon that he has already cleared. It is also necessary for discovering the location of the seventh dungeon. When Link plays the whistle at the fairy-less lake, the waters will recede to reveal the entrance. This won't be the last time Link encounters magical wind instruments.



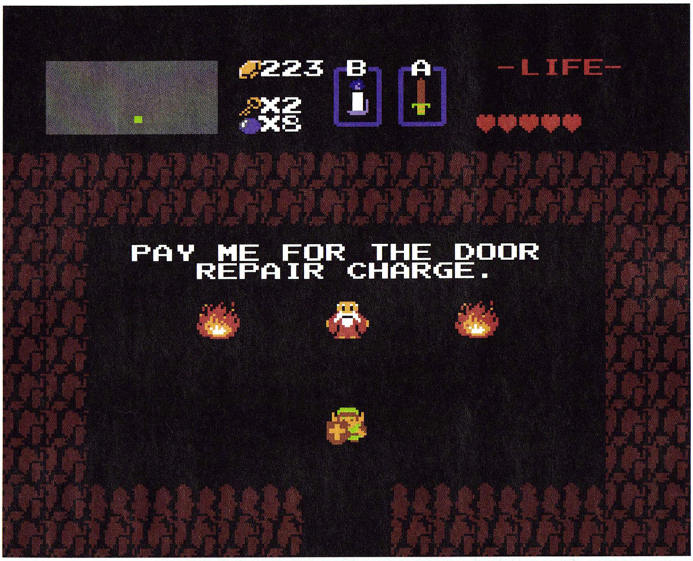
IT'S A SECRET TO EVERYBODY.

"It's a secret to everybody."

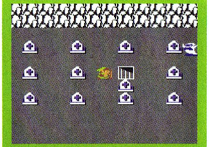
Moblins are some of the fiercest enemies in Hyrule, but Link eventually learns that not all of them are bad. With an awkwardly phrased suggestion to keep his generosity secret, this Moblin helps Link out by giving away some free Rupees, the currency of Hyrule. Don't worry, Moblin, we'll keep it under our green, pointy hat.

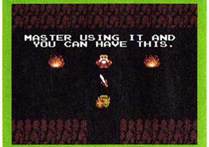
Bombing Has Its Consequences

Exploration is the key to discovering new things in The Legend of Zelda. That means bombing lots of walls and burning lots of bushes. Just be careful as you explore. Blast open the wrong hidden entrance, and you may just find this vengeful fellow inside. He'll swipe 20 Rupees from Link to pay for the damage to his hideout.



PAY ME FOR THE DOOR
REPAIR CHARGE.

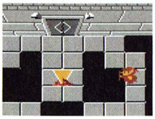




MASTER USING IT AND
YOU CAN HAVE THIS.

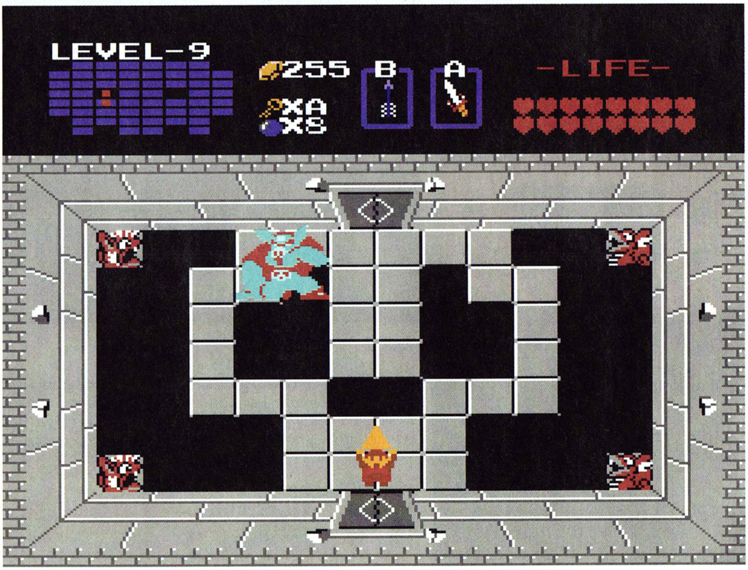
Getting the Magic Sword

Although not required to defeat Ganon, the Magic Sword (which fills the role of the legendary Master Sword found in later games) definitely makes Link's journey easier. Once Link has 12 Heart Containers, he can earn the sword by pushing aside a specific tombstone in Hyrule's graveyard. An old man who hides underground will relinquish the powerful weapon.



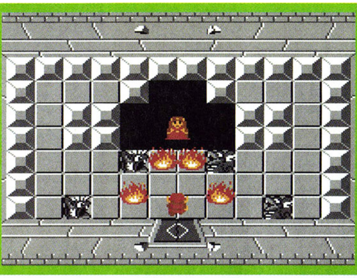
Ganon

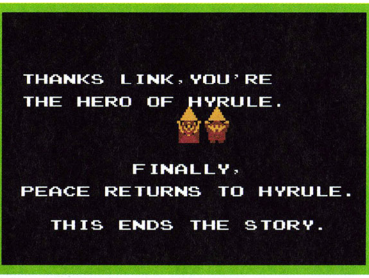
Before we knew him as Ganondorf, he was simply Ganon (or Gannon, according to the game's intro). This giant pig stole the Triforce of Power and kidnapped Princess Zelda. Only Link can recover the treasure and save the girl. After traveling through Death Mountain, Link uses the newly reassembled Triforce of Wisdom to lure Ganon out of hiding. Only by using Silver Arrows does our hero have a chance of defeating the monster.



Ending

Ah, victory! After a long and arduous quest, Ganon has been beaten and the Triforce of Power has been reclaimed. Now we can sit back and enjoy the ending as the rescued Zelda declares Link a true hero. Our quest is finally over.

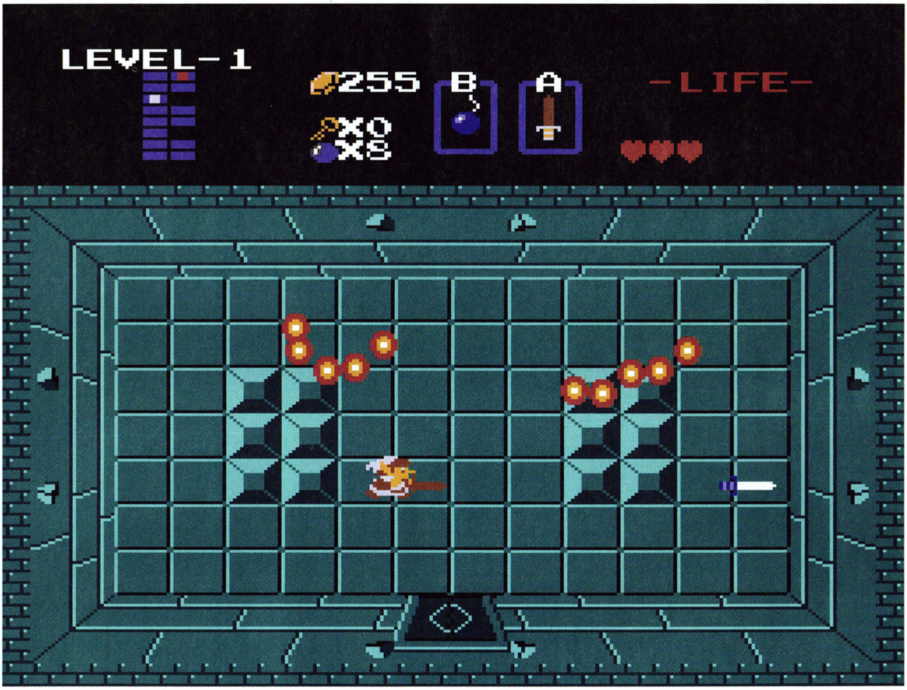


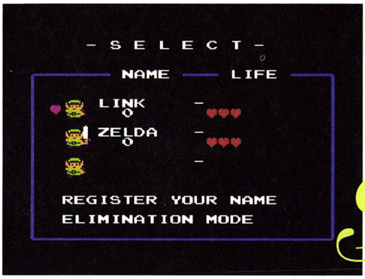


THANKS LINK, YOU'RE
THE HERO OF HYRULE.

FINALLY,
PEACE RETURNS TO HYRULE.

THIS ENDS THE STORY.





- S E L E C T -

NAME — LIFE

LINK 0 — ♥♥♥

ZELDA 0 — ♥♥♥

—

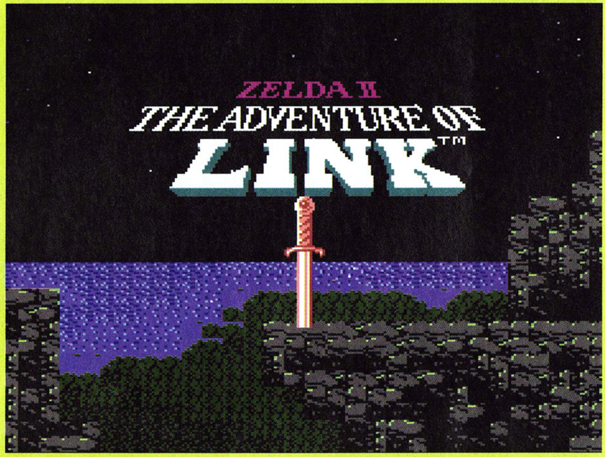
REGISTER YOUR NAME

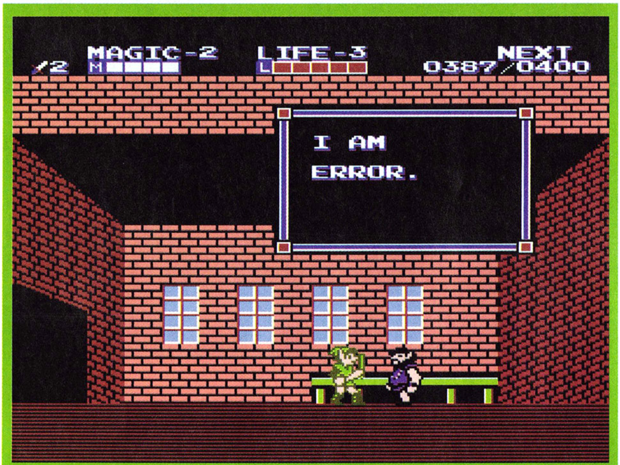
ELIMINATION MODE

The Second Quest

Did we just say that our quest was over? Oh, wait...it's totally not. Just as Link begins to celebrate his achievements, a second quest is revealed. Not only is this new adventure more difficult, but its items are better hidden and its dungeons are completely different. If you like, you can go straight to the second quest by registering your name as ZELDA on the name-input screen.

ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

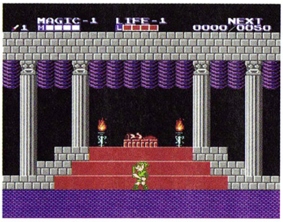




I AM ERROR.

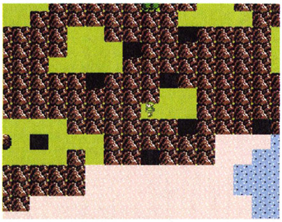
"I am Error."

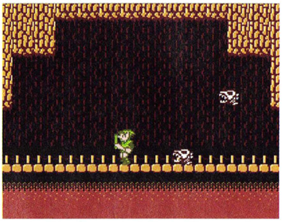
During his journeys, Link meets many enigmatic people who dispense cryptic advice. Few, however, are more mysterious than Error, a man Link encounters in the town of Ruto. At first Error will only tell Link his name, but after Link meets another fellow in the town of Mido, Error will give Link a hint about how to reach the Island Palace.



Zelda—Cursed!

In The Legend of Zelda, we had to fight through the entire adventure to catch a glimpse of the fair princess. Not in Zelda II, though. No, Link begins his adventure in the chamber where Zelda sleeps—under the curse of an evil magician. Only by bringing together all three pieces of the Triforce can the spell be broken. Link sets off from the chamber to reclaim the Triforce of Courage.



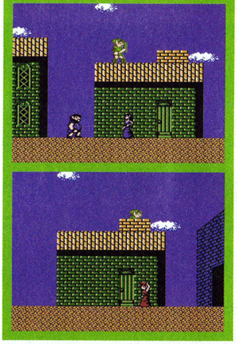


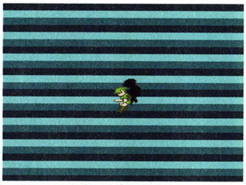
Death Mountain

Link returns to Death Mountain, but its layout is somewhat different this time around. The mountain is a sprawling maze filled with tunnels that lead to dead ends. Only by taking the proper path will Link reach Spectacle Rock, where he will find a Magic Container and an important tool, the hammer.

Chimney Diving

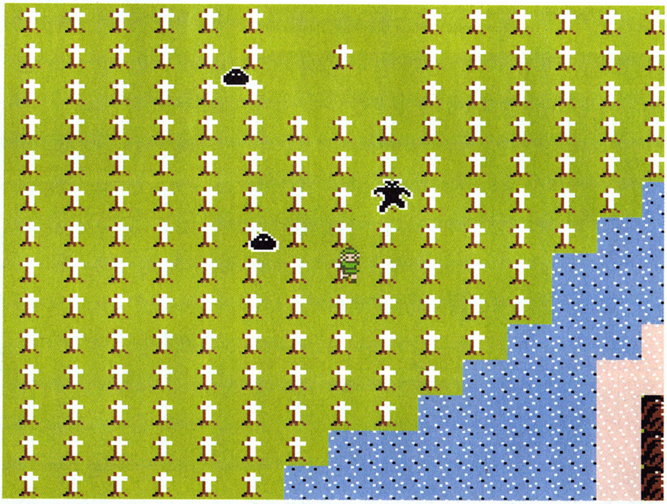
Each new town that Link visits in Zelda II is filled with all sorts of buildings, many of which contain townsfolk who offer useful advice. Like most people, Link usually enters these buildings through the front door. In the town of Darunia, though, one house requires a more unorthodox method of entry. To learn the upward-thrust technique from the town's knight, Link must use his Jump spell to leap onto the rooftops, from which he can then slip down the chimney of the knight's house.

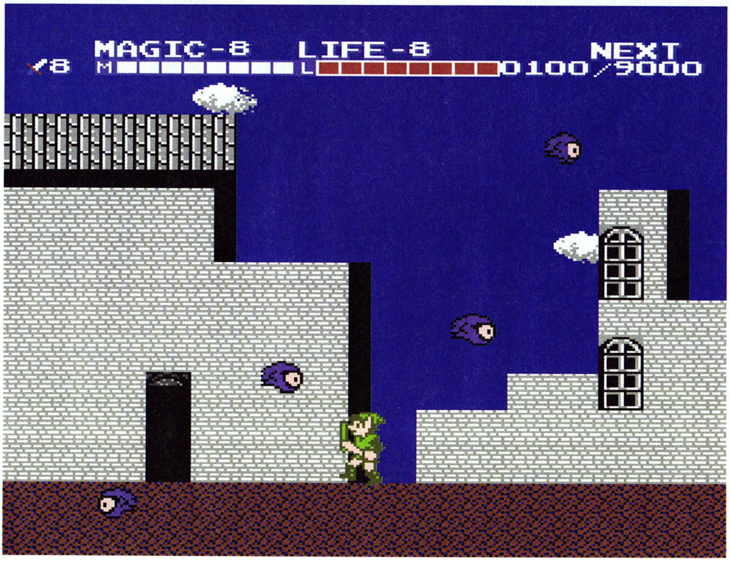


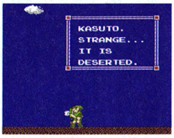


Graveyard Plummet

South of the town of Mido is a massive graveyard. Within it, one marker is clearly set apart from the rest—this is the king's tomb. Continue south from the king's tomb, and Link will fall into a hidden pit that eventually leads him to the Island Palace.







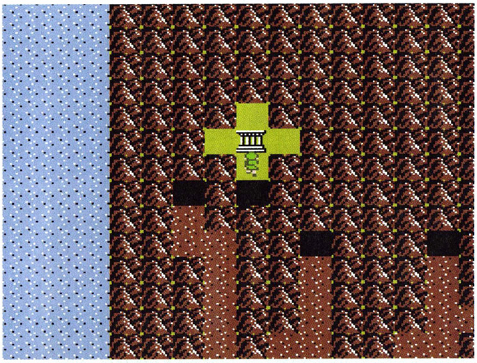
KASUTO.
STRANGE...
IT IS
DESERTED.

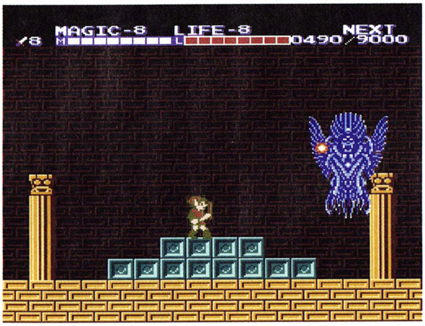
The Ghost Village

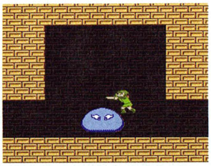
While on his quest, Link discovers the hidden town of Kasuto. There he learns that its citizens fled the original Kasuto when it was overrun by creatures called Moas. When he eventually arrives in the old Kasuto, the mysterious Moas are invisible to Link, making them extremely dangerous foes. Only by using the cross found in the sixth dungeon can Link see these ghostly enemies.

The Great Palace

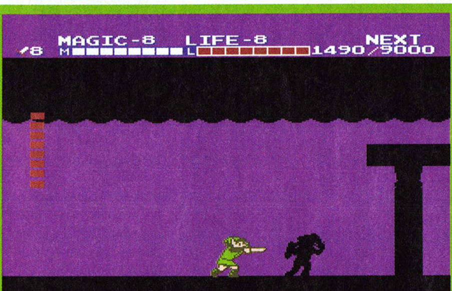
The Great Palace is the final dungeon in Zelda II, and it's a whopper. Not only is this massive fortress built like a maze, but it contains hordes of extremely difficult enemies. If he's not fully powered up, Link has little chance of getting through this dungeon. Reaching the end means a confrontation with the dreaded boss, Thunderbird.




MAGIC-8 LIFE-8 NEXT
8 M L 0490/9000



MAGIC-8 LIFE-8 NEXT
8 M L 0320/9000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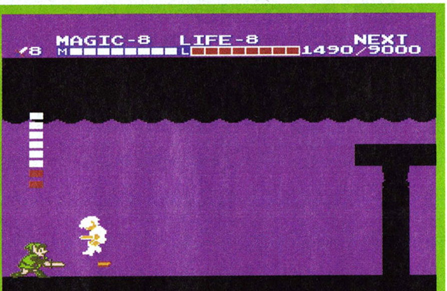
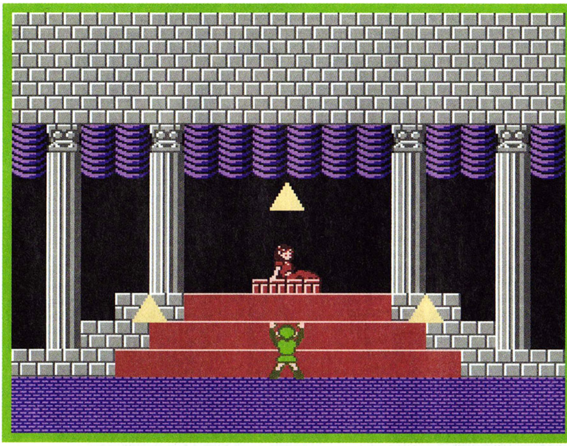

MAGIC-8 LIFE-8 NEXT
8 M L 1490/9000

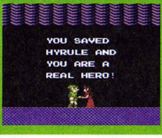
Dark Link

Thunderbird isn't the only boss in the Great Palace. Just as Link is about to collect the Triforce of Courage, a shadowy version of himself leaps out of his body. This is Dark Link, a creature that possesses all of Link's abilities. He may sound fearsome, but Link can easily defeat his evil doppelgänger by crouching in the left corner of the room and repeatedly slashing with his sword.

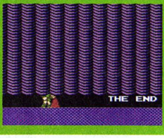


Zelda Awakes

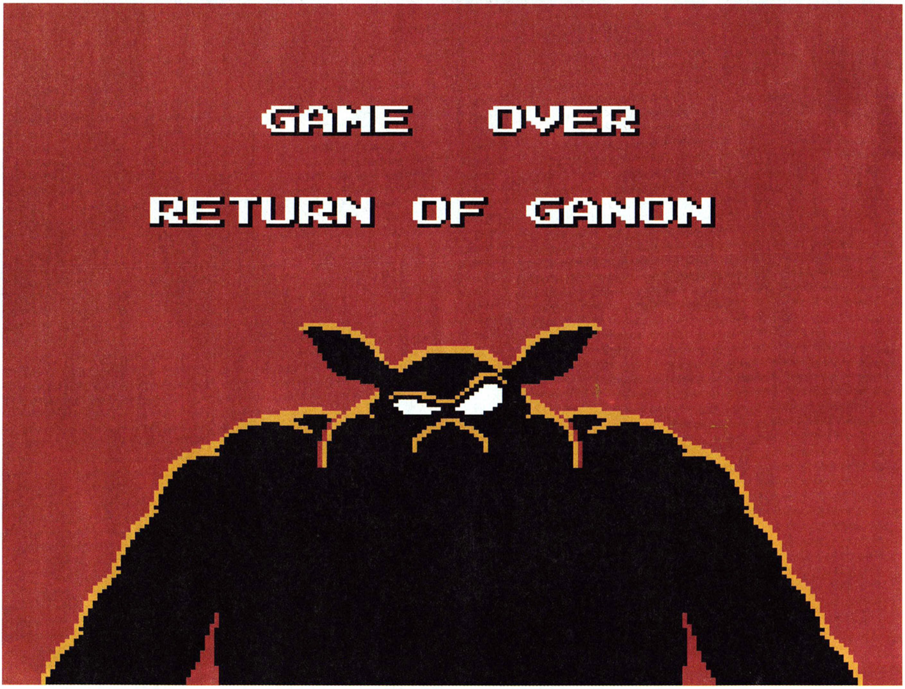
Huzzah! With the Triforce of Courage reclaimed, all three pieces of the Triforce have been reunited. The spell is broken, and Zelda awakes! Once again, the princess declares Link to be a "real hero," and the curtain closes on Link's final NES adventure. Watch closely, and you'll see that when the curtain goes down, Zelda leans in to give Link a kiss. Way to go, hero!



YOU SAVED
HYRULE AND
YOU ARE A
REAL HERO!



THE END



GAME OVER

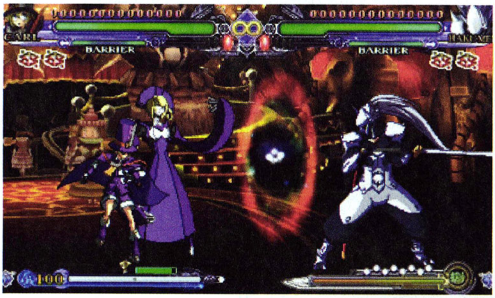
RETURN OF GANON

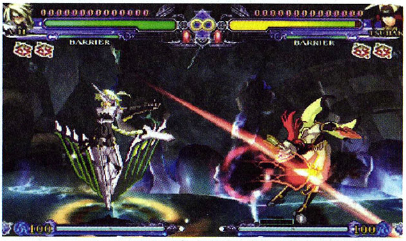
Return of Ganon

Game-over screens on the NES were usually nothing special—they were often just white text on a black background. Zelda II was not your usual game, though. When Link loses all of his lives, we're treated to this haunting screen that announces the return on Ganon. This marks the Prince of Darkness's only appearance in this game. Even so, we made sure to play extracarefully just to avoid seeing Ganon's wicked glare.

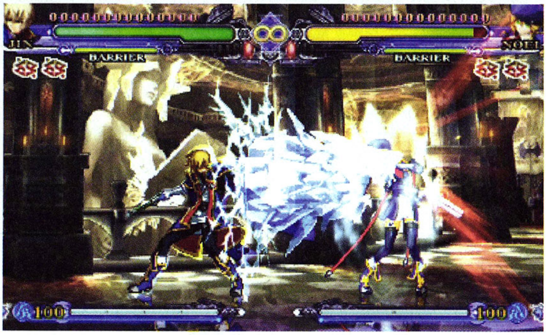
Out of the Blue

The hottest 2D fighter around emerges from the arcades to land on Nintendo 3DS as **BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 2**.





Gorgeous graphics? Check. Flashy special moves? Check. Lots of modes and characters? Check. BlazBlue pretty much has it all.



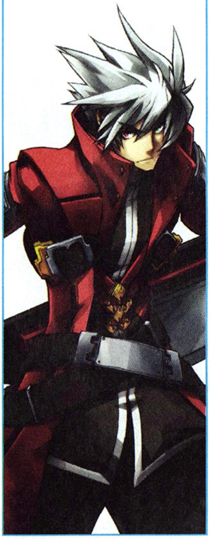
The BlazBlue series isn't half as crazy as it looks. It helps to take some time and peer beneath the surface. You first look at the story and the cast and the graphics and it seems like the vision of a mental patient—a fantasy adventure as filtered through a mind fried by Japanese cartoons and '80s-vintage heavy metal. The game underneath, though, sits solid as a rock. It might be the finest piece of fighting-game design since the very best days of Street Fighter. BlazBlue has been a huge hit in Japanese arcades, the console versions have a cult following worldwide, and now it's on the way to the Nintendo 3DS handheld in the form of BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 2, coming soon to North America from Aksys Games.

BY **DAVID F. SMITH**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES** DEVELOPER: **ARC SYSTEM WORKS** RELEASE: **SPRING 2011**

Ragna the Bloodedge

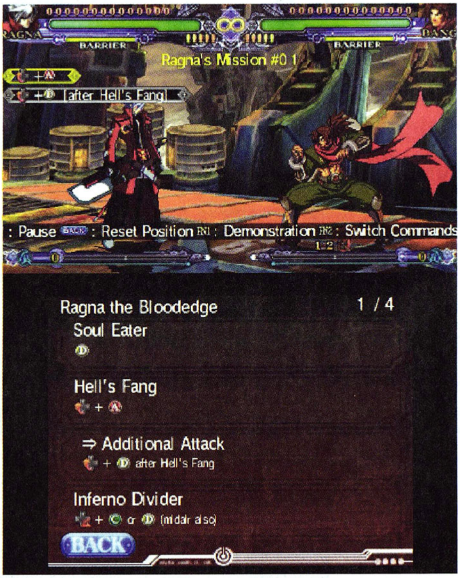
The hero (or antihero?) of the story, Ragna is an unbeatable warrior on a mission to overthrow the tyranny of the NOL. Although CS2 makes him harder to play than before, that probably won't stop fans who enjoy his flashy style and sneaky life-draining special moves.



WELCOME HOME

Explaining what the name *BlazBlue* means would take a couple of pages worth of mind-warping story details. Fortunately, the game itself is fairly easy to sum up—it's a one-on-one 2D fighter starring 18 fantasy warriors. The basics are simple enough: just a joystick and four attack buttons—weak, medium, strong, and Drive (a special character-specific technique)—but underneath that surface there's layer after layer of hidden moves and tactics. (Attentive players may remember BlayzBloo, a silly little beat-'em-up game that hit DSiWare last year. This is the serious fighter it was spoofing.)

So what does the right-hand half of the title mean? Well, the original BlazBlue's full name was BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger. It represented a long-awaited comeback by Arc System Works, the development team that turned 2D fighting upside down with the Guilty Gear series. Calamity Trigger was the high-def heir to Guilty Gear, another game that mixed a wild visual style with complex, carefully balanced gameplay. Then came BlazBlue: Continuum Shift, a sequel with a couple of new characters and single-player modes; this is the most recent version of the game that's been released on handhelds and consoles. Continuum Shift 2, until now playable only in arcades,


RAGNA
BARRIER
BARRIER
Ragna's Mission #01
+ Ⓐ
+ Ⓓ [after Hell's Fang]
: Pause BACK : Reset Position R1 : Demonstration R2 : Switch Commands
1:2

Ragna the Bloodedge 1 / 4

Soul Eater
Ⓓ

Hell's Fang
+ Ⓐ

⇒ Additional Attack
+ Ⓓ after Hell's Fang

Inferno Divider
+ Ⓒ or Ⓓ (midair also)

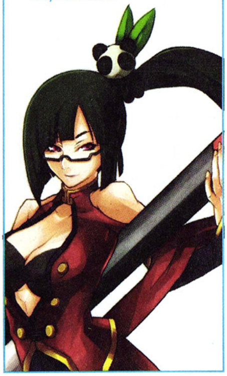
BACK

BARRIER
BARRIER
HEAT
5

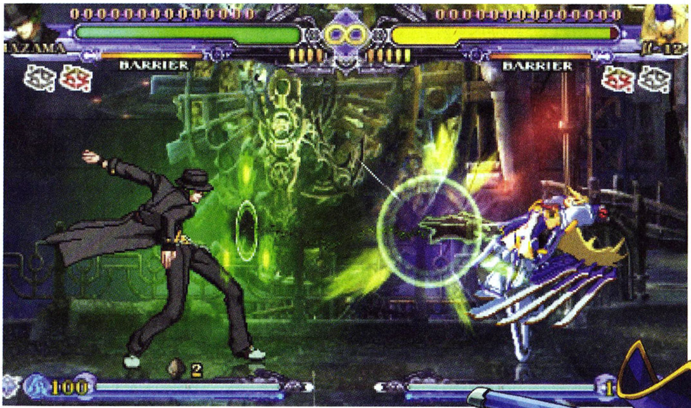
[Left] The bottom screen displays a convenient list of your special moves.

Litchi Faye Ling

A doctor in the Asian district of Kagutsuchi, secretly tied to the mysterious Sector Seven organization, Litchi fights with her bare hands and her transforming magical staff. She's been powered down somewhat in CS2, but her unarmed attacks are much more potent than they used to be.

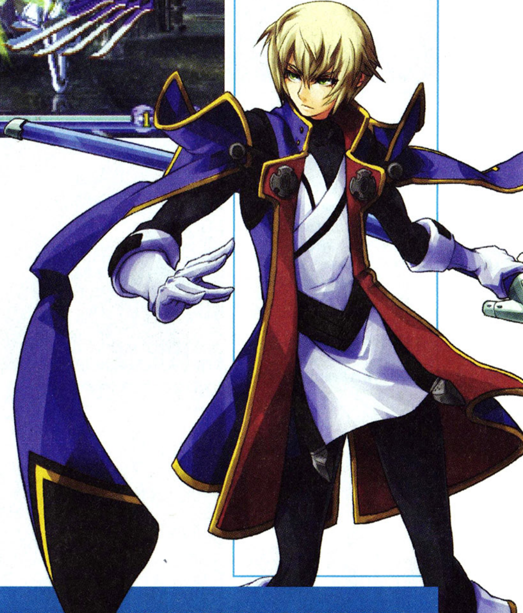


NOEL
BARRIER
RACHE
2
700
50
100


HAZAMA
BARRIER
BARRIER
100
2

Jin Kisaragi

One of the two central characters in the story, Jin is a rogue NOL officer with deadly sword and ice attacks. He's an all-around character for fighting-game traditionalists, and the rebalanced gameplay in CS2 makes him one of the most powerful characters.



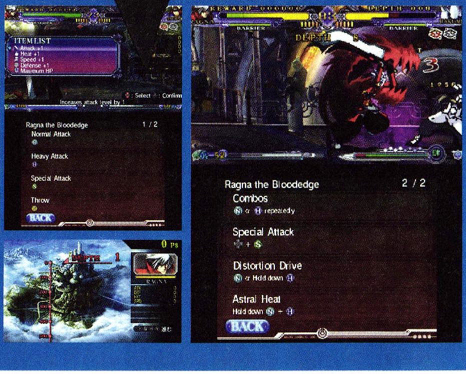
represents another few steps forward for the series: a new character, new solo gameplay, and totally different settings to bring it ever closer to even competitive balance. Adjusted based on testing and feedback from arcade battles around the world, CS2 promises a faster-moving game designed to provide more back-and-forth action and more challenge on both offense and defense.

That balanced competition is what most BlazBlue fans are

AGNA
HAZAMA
BARRIER
BARRIER
100
100
2

Seasons in the Abyss

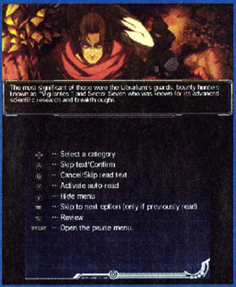
Abyss mode, a cross between a fighting-game survival mode and an old-fashioned mainframe dungeon crawl, is the major new addition to CS2's solo game. Slogging through opponents opens up the opportunity to dig deeper and deeper in the Abyss. The enemies get tougher down there, but the rewards for wins get better (in the form of points for opening unlockable content) and in true dungeon-hacking style, killing bad guys lets fighters level up and build their stats. Beefier stats mean more damage-dealing muscle, a bigger default Heat gauge, and other handy weapons for enterprising dungeon-explorers.


ITEMLIST
Attack +1
Heat +1
Speed +1
Defense +1
Maximum HP
: Select : Confirm
Inceases attack level by 1
Ragna the Bloodedge 1 / 2
Normal Attack
Heavy Attack
Special Attack
Throw
BACK
DEPTH 1
0 PS
RAGNA
REWARD
DEPTH
BARRIER
BARRIER
DEPTH
Ragna the Bloodedge 2 / 2
Combos
or repeatedly
Special Attack
Distortion Drive
or Hold down
Astral Heat
Hold down +
BACK

Intro to Reality

The BlazBlue saga begins as humanity emerges from a terrible war with the power to use magic. Control of the Grimoires that provide that power is in the hands of the Novus Ordus Librarium (NOL), a dominating organization that suppresses all attempts to break free of its control. All except one, anyway—Ragna the Bloodedge, a seemingly invincible warrior, is traveling from city to city laying waste to the strongholds of the NOL.

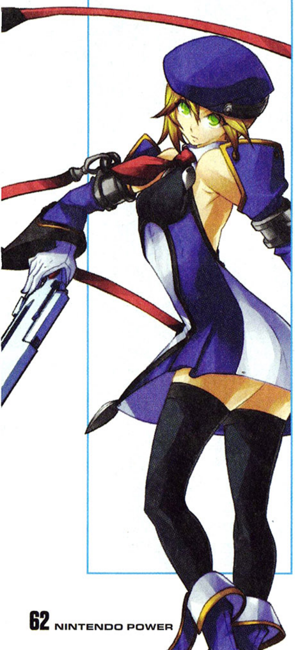
In Calamity Trigger, Ragna ventured into the city of Kagutsuchi and barely survived (Noel Vermillion, a well-meaning NOL officer, saved him from being absorbed by the game's final boss, the dimensional guardian Nu-13). Continuum Shift sets the stage for another war between Ragna, the NOL, a handful of independent bounty hunters, and anybody else who might accidentally trip into a battle of superhuman proportions.

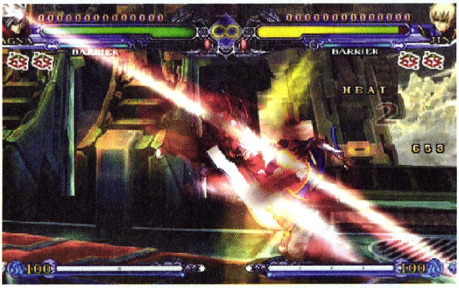


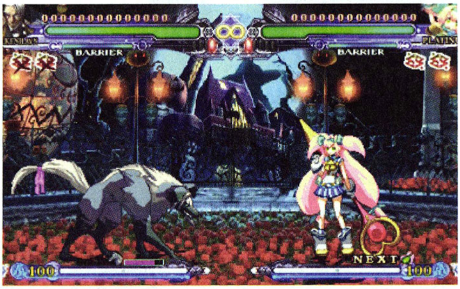
The most significant of those were the Librarium's guards, bounty hunters known as "Vigilantes," and Sector Seven who was known for its advanced scientific research and breakthroughs.

Noel Vermillion

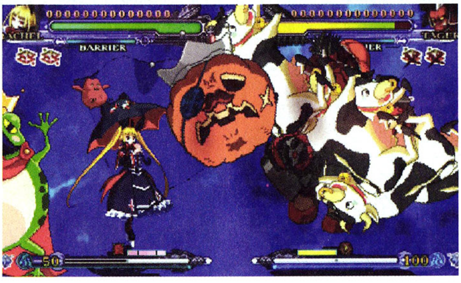
A rookie NOL officer nominally sent to track down Jin. In reality, her past and true identity...well, it's complicated. Very, very complicated. She's fast and comparatively easy to use, and is a fun character for newer players who can quickly get a handle on her tree of gun-slinging combos.







[Below] Yes, that is indeed a herd of heifers falling from the sky.

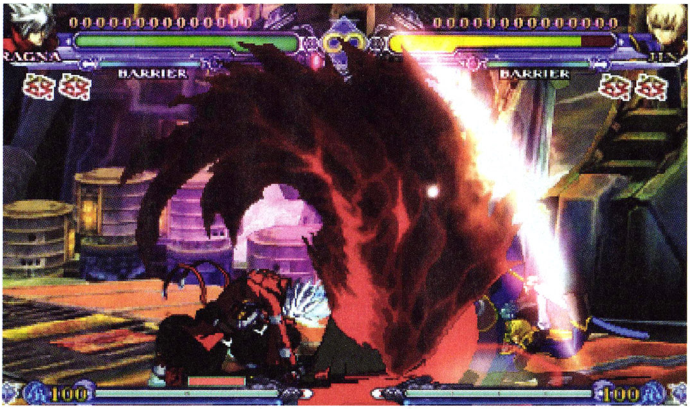


about. The hardest of the die-hard console players have more than 10,000 ranked online matches to their credit. Once again, though, it helps to look past the surface. This isn't just a refuge for desperate 2D-fighting freaks (although it's pretty good for that, make no mistake). Like Guilty Gear before it, it's a game almost anyone can get a handle on.

AGGRESSIVE PERFECTOR

Some fighting games aren't too friendly to newcomers. That's part of why the genre took a dive in the late '90s. Street Fighter III, Virtua Fighter 3—these were games that hardcore players loved, but their learning curves turned off casual fans. BlazBlue was built with that lesson in mind. You don't have to devote your life to it to have a good time. This is a fighter that's fun at any level of skill. Even when played by a relative rookie, it has a smooth, exciting flow to it. Even if you don't know *exactly* what you're doing, it doesn't look or feel terribly awkward (not like the staggered rhythm of a low-level Virtua Fighter match), especially after you settle on a character with the right kind of gameplay style.

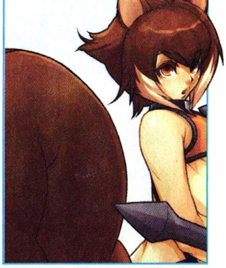
While the game is quite finely balanced overall, the cast is exceptionally diverse, ranging from straightforward hack-and-slashers to characters built around clever traps and strategies of misdirection. The heroes of the story mode, such as Noel, Jin, and Ragna, tend to have the most conventional move sets. For fans of Street Fighter and other classic games who want to make an easy transition, those are the ones to



[Above] Yep, that'll take out a Guard Primer.

Makoto Nanaya

Yeah, she looks like Squirrel Girl. Go figure. Noel's fighting schoolmate is one of the newest characters in the BlazBlue pantheon, just lately added as a downloadable entry, and CS2 has made her extremely deadly; she's an all-out fighter for players who like an aggressive rushing strategy.



pick for learning the basics.

Minor characters live further out in left field. Carl Clover (a wanna-be bounty hunter with a sister complex) is actually two fighters in one: a boy and his pet robot that move and fight independently. Rachel Alucard (a Lolita-looking vampire armed with her shape-shifting, magic pet cat) uses indirect attacks that manipulate the environment and knock opponents into explosive hazards. Some of the truly out-there fighters might take a bit of practice to use, but it's always more fun to beat your friends with something really strange.

The head-to-head game isn't the only offering, of course. CS2 has a fistful of different single-player modes, plus a dense, user-friendly tutorial system that helps newbies dig into the hidden depths of the game. Players with no fear for their sanity can delve into the story mode, where each character ventures through a series of battles and digital-comic-book cut-scenes. Be warned: the storyline is weird enough to cook and twist your brain into something like a big pretzel. (If the final boss were a quiz on the hidden details of the plot, chances are almost nobody would pass.)

Crash Course in Brain Surgery

Continuum Shift's gameplay system has a lot that makes it unique—enough, in fact, that even fighting veterans might need to spend some time learning what's what. Here's a rundown of some key moves and concepts.

BARRIER GUARD Holding back on the Control Pad puts up a normal block in BlazBlue, but pressing the weak and medium attack buttons throws up a Barrier Guard. In return for consuming the limited Barrier gauge, this provides extra defense. You can use the Barrier Guard while moving or jumping, and some attacks have to be blocked with it (especially since CS2 adds more otherwise-unblockable moves).

HEAT GAUGE This is the big gauge at the bottom of the screen, which fills as you deal and take damage. Lots of useful techniques eat up Heat, including Distortion Drive superattacks and the Rapid Cancel move (which suddenly interrupts a move to lead into a completely different string of attacks).

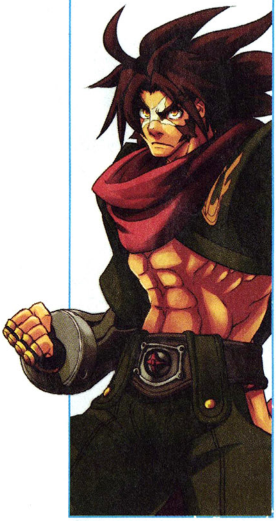
GUARD CRUSH AND GUARD PRIMERS Certain attacks take a toll even when they're blocked. Those knock a Guard Primer (the bullet-shaped icons underneath the health bar) out of the target's stock. When all the Primers are gone, the next strike causes Guard Crush, a brief defenseless state that usually leads to serious damage.

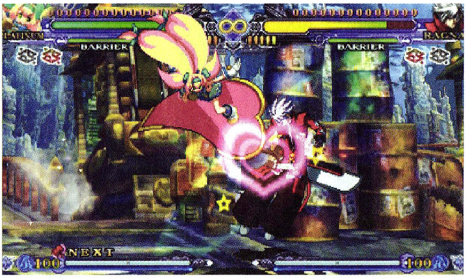
BREAK BURST Hitting all four face buttons unleashes an attack called a Break Burst. Do it while on the offensive, and it's a Gold Break Burst, which launches the target into the air. Do it while blocking or taking a hit, and it's a Green Break Burst, which throws back the attacker for a countermove. Players can dish out a maximum of two Break Bursts per match, and the green version costs half the user's Guard Primer stock (rounded up, even), but they open up the target for deadly combos.

BEGINNER MODE As a kindness to new players, CS2 offers a simplified control scheme that automatically strings together basic combos. It's handy for learning how different characters work before diving into the full-fat version of the game.

Bang Shishigami

A valiant ninja from the rebellious Ikaruga Federation, Bang strives to protect the weak and helpless from evil, especially when his superhero theme song is playing. In CS2 he may not be as tough as he once was, but on the other hand, he still has more style than half the cast put together.





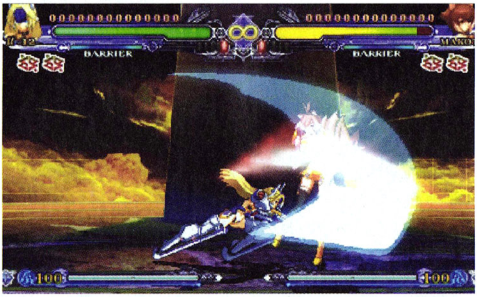
The biggest attraction for anyone, though, might be the simple pleasure of looking at this game. It's a gorgeous piece of artwork, with ultrasharp characters cast in front of detailed 3D backgrounds. Whether the players are opponents in a world championship match or a pair of newcomers feeling things out, BlazBlue might be almost as fun to watch as it is to play.

COMMAND OF THE BLADE

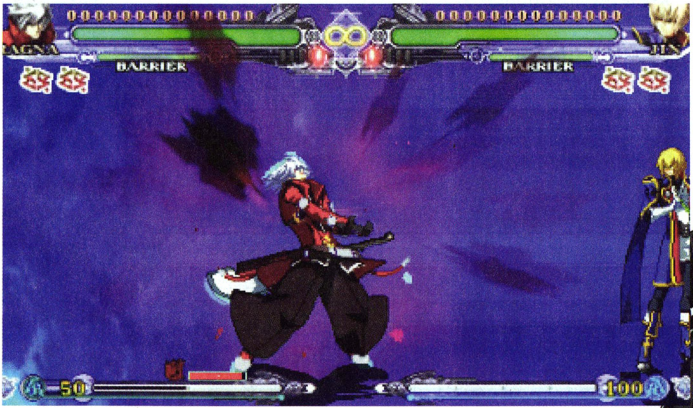
Aksys Games promises they haven't sacrificed any of the game's content to make Continuum Shift 2 fit on the Nintendo 3DS. The handheld version will have the same solo modes as earlier console versions, including an updated version of the first Continuum Shift's Legion mode (a cross between a familiar fighting game and a Risk-style strategy conquest sim). The new version, Legion 1.5, adds more maps to conquer and more power-ups to help your army of

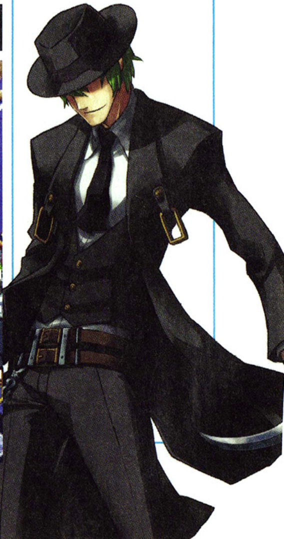
Hazama

Say hello to the bad guy. "Hazama" is the cover identity of BlazBlue's ultimate villain, the hidden power behind the NOL, and the killer who orphaned Ragna, Noel, and Jin when they were children. CS2 gives him extra speed, better ranged attacks, and more impact behind his unique play style.



[Below] Believe it or not, the eponymous BlazBlue is attached to Ragna's arm. Play the story mode and it'll make sense...sort of.





Dethroned Emperor

Since no game is ever quite perfectly balanced, some fighting-game characters are more useful than others. Hardcore players group them into tiers. The best characters are on Tier A, one might say; Tier B isn't quite as strong; Tier C has a disadvantage; and Tier D is for experts only.

Continuum Shift 2 gives a serious shakeup to the previous game's tiers. Litchi, Bang, and Valkenhayn have been taken down a notch while Noel, Jin, Rachel, and Makoto are meaner than they used to be. In general, though, the separation between tiers is less stark than ever before. High-end fighters don't have the advantage they used to.

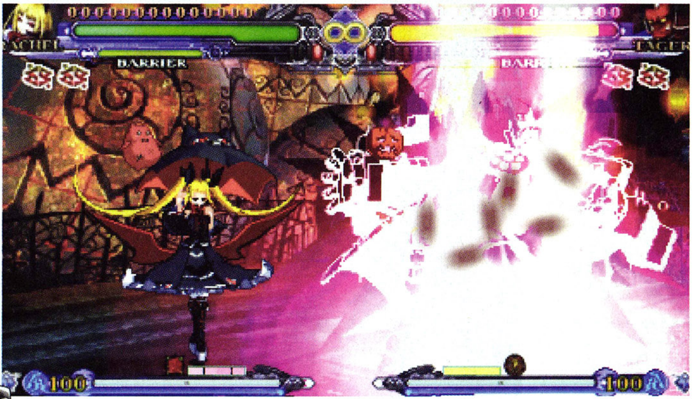
As in all good games, of course, a creative, capable player can overcome any edge the game itself provides. It's no fun to pick and play a character just because somebody says they're the strongest one, either. Show a little individuality and learn how to fight with a character that suits your personal style.

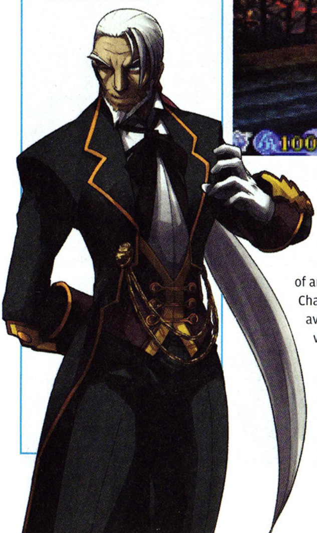
BARRIER
BARRIER
100
100

Valkenhayn R. Hellsing

In Calamity Trigger, Valkenhayn was the humble butler to Rachel Alucard, another playable character (she's the cute blond vampire girl). Continuum Shift let him join the fighting cast, but sadly, CS2 diminishes his power a touch—he dishes out less damage and he isn't quite as fast.

[Below] Rachel doesn't hit hard directly, but she has a way of making opponents walk into something painful.





fighters demolish the opposition. Joining it is an all-new Abyss mode, another hybrid that has elements of an RPG dungeon hack. Characters that were available in the console version of Continuum Shift as costly downloadable content are included in CS2 from the get-go, and a new character, Platinum, joins the roster; all we can say is that she ought to appeal to fans of the dangerously cute.

BlazBlue's control scheme should work as well on the handheld as anywhere. The four face buttons are enough to support the arcade version's array of attacks, while the Control Pad naturally takes care of movement and defense. Extra commands can be mapped to the Circle Pad, but it isn't a necessary element of the game system—there's no need to scoot that left thumb back and forth between control inputs.

Some diehard players—the ones that own 20-pound custom-built arcade sticks—may balk at the thought of playing their fighting games on the small screen. But if you're in the other 99.9 percent of the gaming public, it looks like the Nintendo 3DS version of BlazBlue is going to treat you right, with a beautiful, cutting-edge, arcade-quality fighting game that you can take wherever you go. Does that sound a little crazy? Just remember that BlazBlue is never quite as crazy as it seems.

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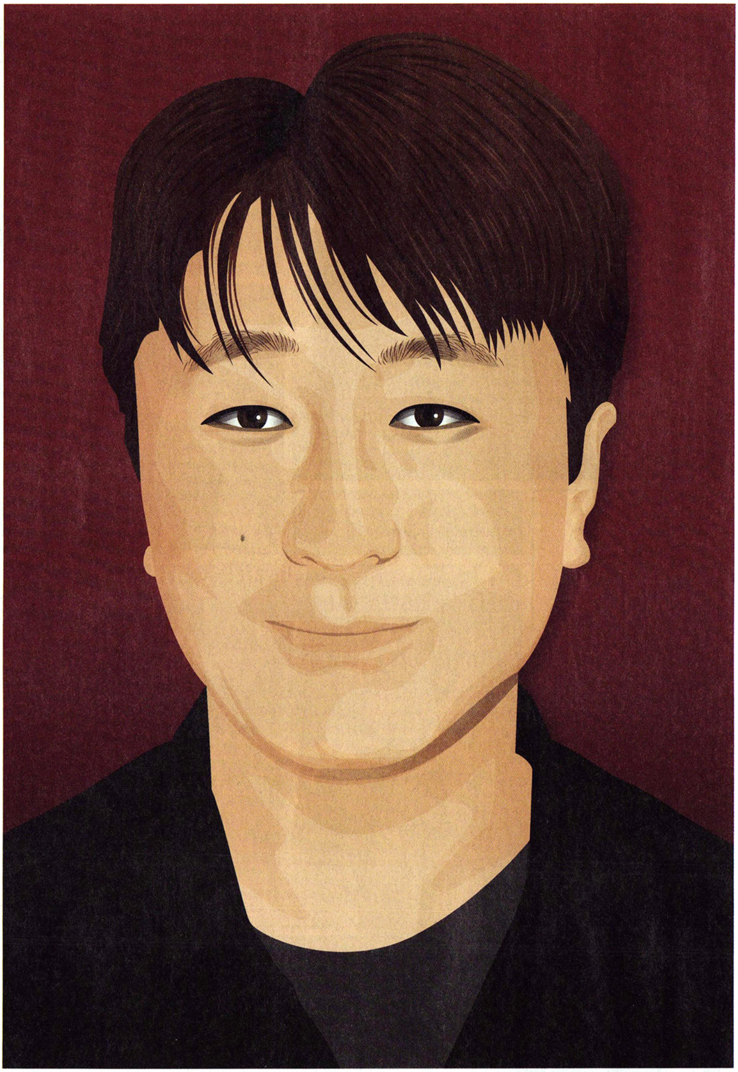
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
August 10, 1971

BIRTHPLACE
Osaka, Japan

POSITION
Deputy head of consumer games R&D division and general manager of R&D Tokyo production department, Capcom

BEST KNOWN FOR
Reviving the Street Fighter franchise, trying to impress the ladies

FAVORITE FOOD
Gyoza

CURRENT PROJECTS
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition, Street Fighter X Tekken

Yoshinori Ono

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Looking for a fight? As the man currently responsible for the ever-popular Street Fighter franchise, Yoshinoro Ono will bring it to you. A composer and sound programmer when he joined Capcom in the early 1990s, Ono provided audio for a number of hit arcade and home games; as technology evolved he helped bring unique sound experiences to Capcom's titles. But when Capcom introduced the producer role to its game-creation process, Ono put his musical background aside for new challenges and greater responsibilities. In his new position, Ono brought Street Fighter back to the forefront with the 2009 release of Street Fighter IV, proving that he knows not only what fans want, but how to give it to them. We're confident that the series—and whatever else Ono chooses to tackle—is in good hands.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you originally get into the video game business?

YOSHINORI ONO
Well, actually, I didn't study games in school and didn't study graphics.... What I had studied in university was architecture and I had initially planned, as you would assume, to get out of architecture school and go on to become an architect. What happened instead is, at the time, as many young men are, I was obsessed with getting girls to like me. One method I found that seemed to work was being in a band, so I was in a band in my free time that I wasn't playing video games. I got to thinking that it would be cool to combine these hobbies of mine into a career—if I could do something with music and still have girls like me potentially, and also something to do with games. It was just around the time I starting thinking this that I noticed an ad in the paper that Capcom was looking for sound people. So I gave them a call, went in for an interview, and I was hired on the spot and told to come in the next day. The rest, as they say, is history.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

When I was a kid there were basically two career paths I had envisioned for myself: one, which is pretty close to what I ended up doing, is that I wanted to be somehow involved with computer games in general. The other one I wanted to do was to be a pilot, and again this was driven by the fact that I wanted girls to like me.

What kind of things were you doing in your early days at Capcom as a sound guy? What lessons did you learn during that time?

When I started Capcom, the first thing they really got me started on was bug checking.... I did a lot of that at the start. The first *real* job I got was when I got started on the Street Fighter team, which really excited me. Unfortunately, the first job I actually got wasn't quite so glamorous—I was in charge of porting the sound from the arcade version of Street Fighter to the version on the computer that Sharp made, called the X68000. That actually started a chain reaction as well. That basically made the company think of me as "Mr. FM Programmer Guy." [Laughs] Those first couple years were kind of rough. I mean, my whole goal in even trying this job was to improve my chances with the ladies!

What game soundtrack that you composed are you happiest with?

If I look at the question as thinking of what title left the biggest impression on me, it would definitely be Street Fighter Alpha—being a part of that team, getting a chance to do all that, I was very pleased with the results and very pleased with what I was able to do with the others working together. I still actually have nightmares about that. The fact that I was even able to get through that schedule alive and in one piece is what I'm proud of, almost even more so than the music itself.

How did you eventually make the transition to the role of producer?

Well, I didn't just suddenly go from sound composition directly into game production—what happened is that there was kind of a gray zone in between where I had one foot in the sound-composer realm and one foot in the production realm. I got to thinking about how the users themselves listen to so many different styles of music and how it was now possible to bring many different styles of music into games given the increase in hardware potential.... That kind of started me on the path less from actual composition and more toward the organizational work that comes with production.

So this continued for a while...but gradually I started doing more producer-related activities. What happened was [Capcom producer] Keiji Inafune kind of pulled me aside one day, and told me that he thought I was very suited for this kind of work.... Unfortunately I was never able to fulfill my dream—I did meet my lovely wife and marry her, but that was after I became a producer. So all those years I had toiled away as a composer thinking that would help me meet a girl—that didn't pan out exactly as I had planned. [Laughs]

What do you find appealing about the fighting genre?

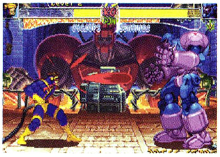
I'll rewind a bit and talk about Space Invaders.... It was just that competitive nature of the game. It's unique in that it's virtual yet physical. The fight's taking place in a virtual space, but you're sitting next to/across from someone physically and you're manipulating physical objects. I just found it really compelling to compete. Of course, in something like Space Invaders you're just competing for high scores, which in and of itself is

GAMEOGRAPHY

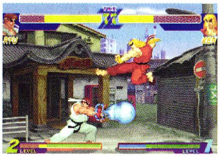
Ono has been involved with Street Fighter in one form or another throughout his entire career. He started out adapting music for home versions of the game, then worked on the series as a composer, a sound producer, and eventually as the producer for the entire series.

STREET FIGHTER II: CHAMPION EDITION
1993, X68000
FM SOUND PROGRAMMER

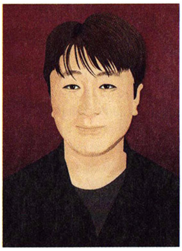
SATURDAY NIGHT SLAM MASTERS
1994, SEGA GENESIS
FM SOUND PROGRAMMER



X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM
1994, ARCADE
COMPOSER



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA
1995, ARCADE
COMPOSER



compelling, but what makes fighting games even cooler and takes them to the next level is because it's actually represented as a fight.

The other thing I like about fighting games that is kind of unique to the genre is the rhythm and the tempo of it. With something like an FPS, it's really kind of black and white—get shot, you lose; shoot them, and you win. With fighting games it's great because you have that life gauge and there's a kind of rhythm that's established—lose, lose, win, lose, win, lose. It's very musical, and there's a sort of give and take that you see throughout the fight. You do take a few hits, you do get knocked out a few times, but it all feels very natural and that's part of that rhythm. I don't find that in a lot of other game genres.

We understand that a few years ago at Capcom, there was somewhat of a resistance to having a Street Fighter IV. Why were you such a proponent of bringing it back and making Street Fighter IV happen?
The last Street Fighter title I had been involved in was Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike, and we felt very strongly that we had reached sort of a pinnacle of what fighting games could do—that we had taken it as far as Capcom could take the genre. So the development team and I were happy to draw a line in the sand and say we were done and that it was as far as we could get. Fast-forward a few years later; I became a producer and started some other things. When I would meet with the press to promote unrelated titles, almost invariably the last question they would ask would be something along the lines of, "Hey, you worked on Street Fighter III. When is there going to be a IV?" That says a lot—really a whole lot—as this was being asked invariably for almost 10 years. So I really got to thinking about it, and I felt obligated to do this title. It was clearly something the fans wanted and something that people would play, so I felt like I had no choice but to champion that.

Street Fighter IV was obviously quite successful. It seems like an ideal example of reviving a franchise that had been mostly dormant for a while. Why did it work, and what's the key to making a successful revival like that?
We had two key concepts that we kept coming back to so that we made sure that everyone was on the same page. One is the idea to return to the roots, and one is the idea of holding a reunion. As far as roots go, the whole point was to make it feel like Street Fighter II. Don't get so far off the path to where it feels like a different game—make it feel familiar. I think those two key concepts really helped us take this where it needed to be, and that's what resonated with people and made it a hit.

Where do you think the Street Fighter franchise will go from here?
As far as moving forward with Street Fighter, I don't think there's a whole lot more for the time being to be done with IV. I think with IV it may be time to take a break, and we're in a pretty good place. As far as the long-term future of Street Fighter? Who knows; anything could happen, but I think for the time being we've made significant inroads and can use this as a base for further expansion to get more people interested, and that's what we'll do.

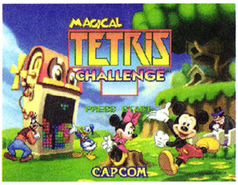
> *"The other thing I like about fighting games that is kind of unique to the genre is the rhythm and the tempo of it."*

Do you think we'll see Street Fighter X Tekken come to the Nintendo 3DS system?
It's certainly in the realm of possibility if people seem to want it. Basically, we've proven with the Nintendo 3DS version of Street Fighter IV [that] we can do an uncompromised port of an arcade fighting game in the palm of your hand on this hardware; techwise, it's absolutely feasible. If a lot of people buy Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition and continue to show interest in the fighting genre on the Nintendo 3DS, I'd be perfectly open to that.

Now we've got an "unrelated title" question! What do we have to do to get a modern update to Darkstalkers?
I feel like I'm at Comic-Con! [Laughs] But I'll be honest with you: I've been lobbying for this in the company. Any time there's a meeting, I'll raise my hand and bring it up. So far, no one has OK'd it, and for years I got a lot of sideways glances—a lot of people probably think I'm nuts. I'll continue to push for it, though; it's something I'm certainly very personally interested in reviving. Thanks for asking that, though, and please don't cut this from the interview! [Laughs] This is exactly the kind of ammunition I need to drive this point across back at the home office.

Recently you mentioned an interest in a hypothetical Nintendo vs. Capcom game. What about that idea appeals to you?
I think what would appeal with that idea is just the level of complete wacki-

GAMEOGRAPHY



MAGICAL TETRIS CHALLENGE
1999, NINTENDO 64
COMPOSER

1400
20
2900
MAX
MAX

STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE—FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE
1999, ARCADE
SOUND PRODUCER

DEVIL MAY CRY
2001, PLAYSTATION 2
SOUND DESIGN COORDINATION

CHAOS LEGION
2003, PLAYSTATION 2
PRODUCER

ness; it's something that would be kind of unbelievable and not something that could actually happen in reality, so to speak. I did mention this in another interview just because it was such a wacky idea; it seems that people may have misinterpreted that as me actually wanting to do it or actually [having] started to do it. In fact, last time I met with Mr. Iwata I actually had to apologize to him and let him know that things often get out of control on the Internet and I was not totally serious about doing that. [Laughs] That said, am I interested in the idea? Sure, it sounds awesome. Am I actually going to or have specific plans to make it? No, and please let people know that. [Laughs]

What Nintendo characters would stand a chance against M. Bison?
I'd have to place my bets on Mario. I mean, the guy can do anything– he shoots fire when he wants to, he can swim underwater for hours without taking a breath, etc. So clearly if he can do all that, he stands a better chance at beating M. Bison than even Ryu himself. He even goes to space! All he has to do is take M. Bison out to space with him, and M. Bison won't be able to breathe. [Laughs]

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
I want to be careful in the way that I phrase this, because I don't want to sound negative or that I'm singling anyone out—but it sometimes feels like there's so much going on in the industry and so many games coming out that it's even hard for someone like me who's really into games to keep track of it all. Do I know a lot about Resident Evil? Sure, but do I know every little bit about it? I don't, and I can't. I just don't have the kind of time to get that into it. I can give you specifics on older games, like what levels in Castlevania have weird bugs in them, but not nowadays because there's just so much stuff going on. I think if our goal as an industry is to get more people involved and invite more people in, I wonder if we might not need to narrow our sights as much or trim things down to get more compact.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy most?
This may make me sound like a bit of a masochist, but I like that it's superhard to get things done. I like running into walls over and over, and I like working myself half to death. In my experience when working with games, even though games have been around over 30 years it's easy to run into problems, and these are not walls you can easily climb over. But I like the challenge, I like the idea of feeling trapped and not knowing what to do next, and that feeling of relief when you do finally see an escape hatch, so to speak.

So when you're facing a particularly difficult problem while working on a game, what is the process for working through it?
Often when running into a problem during development, the Capcom style of doing things is to stop, take a break, and go out to get a breather or a meal with members of the team. What I find is most often, you'll get that flash of insight from doing something totally unrelated to the problem at hand. Solutions have a way of popping up when you least expect them, and one way of forcing them out is to walk away from everything and go out for a meal with your friends. They'll work themselves out ultimately.

> *"Solutions have a way of popping up when you least expect them, and one way of forcing them out is to walk away from everything..."*

What other games or game creators do you admire/enjoy/respect?
As far as specific people go, I would most definitely cite Shigeru Miyamoto as most people would, and I would also cite Shinji Mikami. These are a couple of guys where their work goes beyond genius. I would probably classify my thoughts and feelings toward them [as going] beyond respect and almost into worship; I mean, these guys are the best of the best.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film, literature, and music, do you enjoy?
I'm an unapologetic *Star Wars* fan, so in the realm of film I'd most certainly say George Lucas. I was actually trying to think of a funny answer, but I can't—Lucas is completely clouding my vision because he's so good, and I enjoy the worlds that he creates. In fact, one of the hardest things I had to go through was when I watched Namco get Darth Vader and Yoda in their Soulcalibur game.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Things that I enjoy doing as hobbies are things that relax me, and what relaxes me most lately is playing the guitar or piano at home, but this time simply to relax and not with any ulterior motive of meeting ladies. [Laughs] Also, in the evenings after work I enjoy just getting out and taking the dog for a walk; I find that an enjoyable hobby. And just to be clear, by default I play a lot of games—I just wanted to give you an answer without games.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I think if I could choose one it'd be instant teleportation. Given that nobody lives forever, it'd be nice to participate in as many events as possible and see as many things as possible with my own eyes, and that's the sort of superpower that would enable me to do that.

GAMEOGRAPHY

110700
64
PRESS START BUTTON

CAPCOM FIGHTING EVOLUTION
2004, PLAYSTATION 2
PRODUCER

STREET FIGHTER IV
2009, PLAYSTATION 3/XBOX 360
PRODUCER

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV
2010, PLAYSTATION 3/XBOX 360
PRODUCER

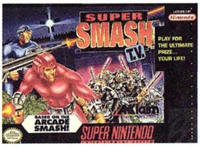
SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 3D EDITION
2011, NINTENDO 3DS
PRODUCER

PLAY BACK

REVISITING THE CLASSICS

1980 1985 1990 1992 1995 2000

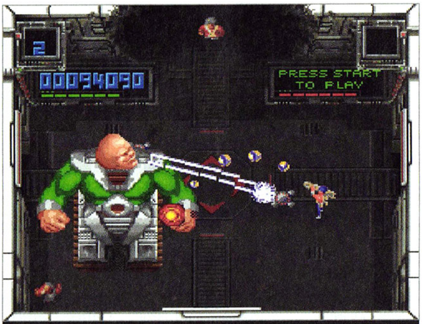
C'mon, Howie Mandel. You and me!


SUPER SMASH T.V.
LICENSED BY Nintendo
PLAY FOR THE ULTIMATE PRIZE... YOUR LIFE!
Acclaim
BASED ON THE ARCADE SMASH!
SUPER NINTENDO

Super Smash TV

It's the world's most insane game show, and you are the next lucky contestant!

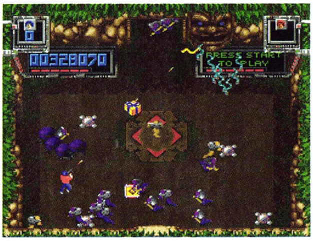
PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**
DEVELOPER: **BEAM SOFTWARE/MIDWAY**
RELEASE DATE: **FEBRUARY 1992**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41**
BIMBOS ACCOMPANYING THE HOST: **2**



Half man, half machine, and all giant-sized jerk, Mutoid Man is Smash TV's first boss. If his treads don't get you, his eye beams probably will!

In the early '90s, the developers at Midway could see the future. They knew that in about a decade's time, television audiences would be tired of the usual dramas and sitcoms, and would be clamoring for something more. Viewers would want to see real people in actual danger, fighting the odds, engaging in tense situations as they competed to see who would be left standing. Midway's version of reality TV, however, didn't involve getting voted off an island. It involved two heavily armed bare-chested dudes running through a mazelike television studio, blowing away hundreds of mutants, thugs, robots, and other assorted bad guys while collecting cash and prizes in the most action-packed game show ever conceived. That, my friends, was Smash TV.

Set in the year 1999, Smash TV made the jump from arcades to the Super NES nearly flawlessly when Acclaim released it as Super Smash TV. It was all here: multidirectional shooting (which successfully used the Control Pad and all four face buttons in lieu of the arcade version's dual joysticks), nonstop waves of enemies, a well-rounded assortment of weapons, an insane number of onscreen characters, two-player cooperative action, grotesque bosses, secret areas, and—of course—a wry sense of humor. Despite the fact that you were tearing countless foes to shreds, the carnage came across as chaotically wacky rather than barbaric thanks to slightly goofy enemies (one of them was named Mr. Shrapnel), silly prizes (including a year's supply of ground beef and a 2,600" TV), and a stereotypical game-show host that periodically spouted lines such as, "I'd buy that for a dollar!" and "Big money! Big prizes! I love it!"



Not every element of the arcade game survived the home-console conversion (some animations were removed, for example), but in certain ways the Super NES game was superior to the arcade edition. The music, in particular, was much richer on the SNES. At the time it was released, Super Smash TV was one of the best arcade adaptations to be found on a home console, and it has stood the test of time extraordinarily well. Super Smash TV's portrayal of the future might not have been completely accurate, but it certainly entertains. —**CHRIS H.**

AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

One of the developers largely responsible for the original arcade version of Smash TV was Mark Turmell, who worked on the title as both a designer and a programmer for Midway. (He's now with Electronic Arts.) Recently Turmell shared the following insights about the game.

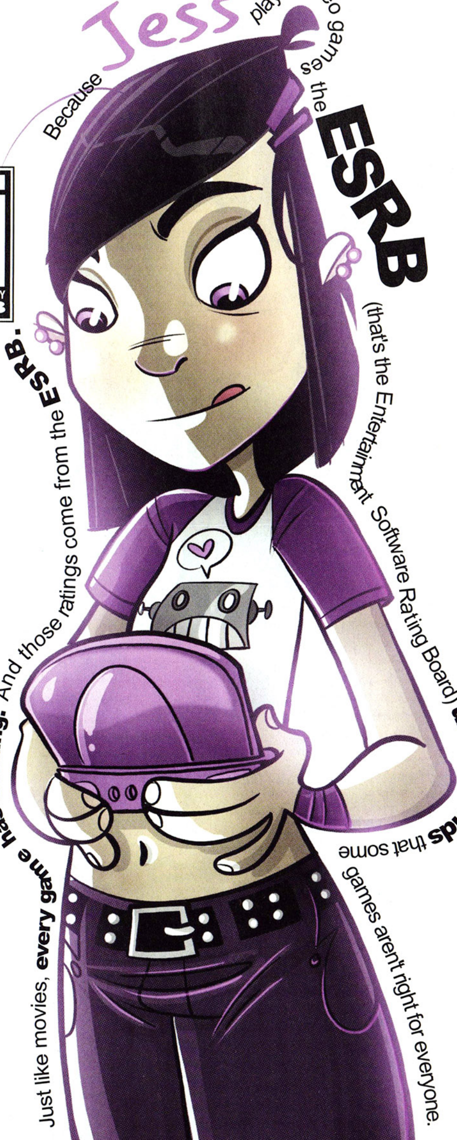
NINTENDO POWER What was the inspiration for Smash TV's dystopian themes?

MARK TURMELL The futuristic films ***The Running Man*** and ***RoboCop*** were my favorites. Robotron: 2084 is my favorite game of all time, and it just seemed natural to place that dual-joystick mechanic on top of that futuristic, scary, and comical world.

What can you tell us about Pleasure Dome bonus areas? Do you feel bad for the people who got to the end, only to choose the wrong door?

Initially, I didn't have time to get anything visually interesting into the game, but once I did, I didn't balance the key icons to appear often enough for how fast people blazed through the waves. I do feel bad for those people who didn't gain access, but then again, I suspect they put in more quarters to try again....

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Because **Jess** plays video games the **ESRB** (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) **understands** that some games aren't right for everyone.

Just like movies, **every game has a rating.** And those ratings come from the **ESRB.**

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www.ESRB.org

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

IN THIS SECTION

Wii

CONDUIT 2 pg.76

LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS pg.81

RANGO pg.86

SPONGEBOB SQUIGGLEPANTS pg.85

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 12: THE MASTERS pg.84

TOP SPIN 4 pg.85

WWE ALL STARS pg.87

NINTENDO DS

LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS pg.81

RANGO pg.86

NINTENDO 3DS

ASPHALT 3D pg.86

LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS pg.81

MADDEN NFL FOOTBALL pg.77

NINTENDOGS + CATS pg.80

PILOTWINGS RESORT pg.82

RAYMAN 3D pg.85

RIDGE RACER 3D pg.78

SAMURAI WARRIORS CHRONICLES pg.85

THE SIMS 3 pg.81

STEEL DIVER pg.88

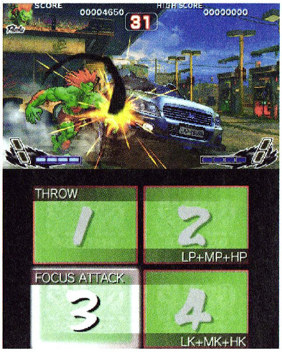
SUPER MONKEY BALL 3D pg.86

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 3D EDITION pg.74

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: SHADOW WARS pg.77

Nintendo 3DS and Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition form an unblockable two-hit combo.

64
M.Bison
Makoto



King of the Streets

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 3D EDITION

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM/DIMPS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

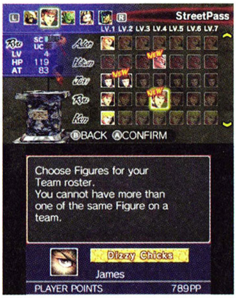
It's almost unbelievable to me that it's been nearly a decade since Street Fighter has graced a Nintendo platform (not accounting for Virtual Console titles) with 2002's Street Fighter Alpha 3 for Game Boy Advance. After all, the promise of playing Street Fighter II: The World Warrior at home was one of the main selling points of the Super NES for me back in the day. But now Capcom's long-running fighting franchise is making a grand return to a Nintendo system with Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition.

Part of what makes Super Street Fighter IV so awesome is that it returns to the basics, bringing back the simple-to-learn, hard-to-master gameplay and the unforgettable characters that made Street Fighter II such a success. (Street Fighter III, while great in its own right, has a higher barrier to entry than its siblings.) This is not to say that SSFIV is simply an updated version of SFII, however. In addition to the obvious graphical improvements, this title features new gameplay elements (getting hit by your opponent fills the Revenge Meter, for example; once it's full, you can unleash a devastating Ultra Combo) and new challengers. Much of the 35-fighter roster is composed of brawlers from previous Street Fighter titles (including SFII, SFIII, and the Alpha series), but the game also introduces six new combatants. Some, such as taekwondo practitioner Juri and Ken and Ryu's master Gouken, are perfect fits; others, such as rotund martial artist Rufus and Turkish oil-wrestler Hakan, seem a little out of place. (Although Blanka did set the precedent for oddball characters in the Street Fighter franchise, so they're not *that* out there....) All of the fighters are fun to play with in their own ways—even if I do find myself defaulting to warriors from the SFII crew simply because I've grown accustomed to using them over the years.

What makes this version stand out from the previous iterations (released last year on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360) is right there in the title: the 3D. Turning on the 3D effect gives you a better sense of depth, making the characters pop off the background environments. The 3D-ness is enhanced further by using the game's optional "dynamic view," which places the camera over your fighter's shoulder—but it can be difficult to judge the distance between you and your opponent when using this perspective. If you prefer to forgo all the newfangled visuals and just play in the most traditional way possible, you can disable the 3D altogether, which ups the frame rate from 30 frames per second to 60. Regardless of whether the 3D was enabled or not, one thing that I find distracting is the lack of background animations. Nothing and no one in the background

51
Chun-Li
Juri

[Right] Can you collect all 500 figurines?

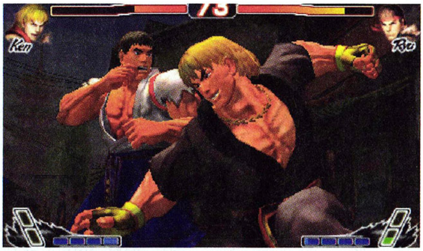


Choose Figures for your Team roster.
You cannot have more than one of the same Figure on a team.

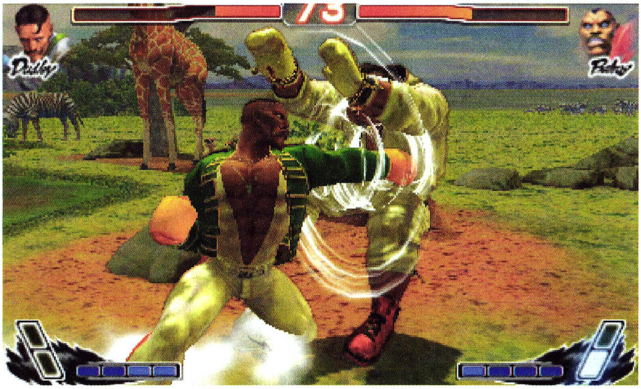
moves an inch; it's disconcerting how still it all is, contrasting sharply with the frantic combat. Still, I'm glad Capcom decided that keeping the core gameplay intact should take priority over everything else.

This might be the most accessible Street Fighter yet—in terms of its controls, anyway. The Nintendo 3DS hardware proves to be a boon. In particular, the Circle Pad makes it a snap to pull off moves that require 360-degree motions, such as Zangief's spinning piledriver. But this title also includes two different control schemes: Pro and Lite. With Pro, you can map four commands to the touch screen, allowing you to, say, activate all three punch or kick buttons with a simple tap. Lite controls, on the other hand, permit you to assign special moves, as well as Super and Ultra Combos, to the touch screen. This means you no longer have to wait and charge Guile's flash kick, for instance; you can just launch it pretty much at will. Fortunately, the game prevents you from dispatching two special moves in immediate succession. But because you're performing feats that wouldn't normally be possible (walking forward and then flash-kicking, for instance), it feels like cheating. Thankfully, you can filter control schemes when creating online matches in case you prefer to face only those who are using the same controls you are.

Speaking of online matches, as good as the single-player portion of this game is, as with most games like it, the real appeal is in facing human competition. Nothing can compare to besting and being bested by your friends. Unfortunately, we were unable to battle over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection in time for this review, but we can attest that the local wireless works flawlessly. The game even includes a Download Play option so you can face a pal who doesn't own the game. Granted, you both have to play as Ryu and you can play on only the Training stage, but it's a welcome option nonetheless.



Ken and Ryu don't just fight—they fight with *style.*

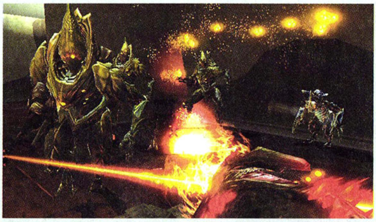


Aside from the 3D visuals, the StreetPass functionality is the most attention-worthy component of SSFIV 3D Edition. Choosing from up to 500 figurines—which are purchased with in-game currency, unlocked with special codes, or traded wirelessly with your friends—you assemble a team that instantly fights against other game owners' teams as you get near those game owners in the real world. There seems to be a good amount of strategy involved as you select your lineup and customize each figure's attributes. Overall, StreetPass is a cool idea that's executed well.

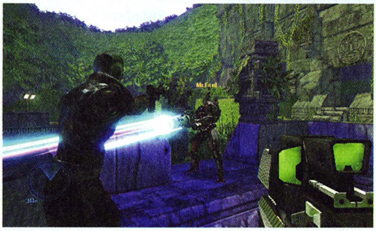
In fact, that sentiment goes for virtually everything about this game. Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition is not only the best Nintendo 3DS launch title; it's simply one of the best fighters I've ever played. **—JUSTIN C.**

SCORE
00006000
HIGH SCORE
00000000
03
Ryu

Sakura
Sagat



Conduit 2 is no slouch when it comes to the graphics.



Aiming High

CONDUIT 2

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Much ado was made about The Conduit when it was released in 2009. Developer High Voltage Software seemed to push the Wii console to its limits with the goal of providing Wii owners the same kind of first-person-shooter experience that was available on the competing platforms. Alas, the end product was hit-and-miss—the graphics, the amount of controller customization, and the number of online-play options were quite impressive, but the singe-player adventure felt generic and the ending was unsatisfying.

Fortunately for those frustrated by The Conduit's cliffhanger finale, Conduit 2 picks up right where the first game left off. Main character Michael Ford and his sidekick, Prometheus—whose consciousness now resides in the All-Seeing Eye (ASE)—are hot on the trail of manipulative baddie John Adams, following him across the globe and shooting the numerous human and alien enemies that get in their way. Things have changed somewhat since the first Conduit title, though; all of the main characters have new voice actors (sorry, Kevin Sorbo fans), and Mr. Ford and Prometheus have undergone a bit of a personality shift. The Mr. Ford/Prometheus relationship is akin to that of Michael Knight and KITT from the television show *Knight Rider*—the cocky, one-liner-spouting Mr. Ford is counterbalanced by the prim-and-proper Prometheus. The pairing works, but it's too bad that Mr. Ford's voice acting still isn't great; his delivery makes the one-liners feel extracheesy.

Thankfully, the gameplay remains as solid as ever. Not only are the controls completely customizable, but Conduit 2 also supports the Classic Controller. Granted, you may not have the same level of precision as when playing with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk control scheme (especially with the Wii MotionPlus accessory attached to the remote), but I personally prefer the Classic Controller when playing a first-person shooter on a console for long stretches at a time.

It's unfortunate that the controls aren't supported by a better single-player experience, however. Sure, there are moments of greatness (the ending stands out in particular), but there are also moments that *should* be great (the battle against the Leviathan boss, for example). I wish the set pieces were as thrilling as the ones in other recent Wii first-person shooters, such as the reimagined GoldenEye 007.

But Conduit 2 is worth playing for the same reason its predecessor was: the online multiplayer. Up to 12 people can compete against each other in modes that range from the traditional (Deathmatch, Capture the Flag) to the more imaginative (Balloon Battle, ASE Basketball). The more of the multiplayer you experience—or the more objects you scan in the single-player game—the more credits you earn to buy weapons, armor (with which you customize your character's look), and upgrades (allowing you to sprint indefinitely, for instance, or heal and be healed more quickly by allies). As an added bonus, some of these upgrades carry over into the single-player campaign, which helps make things easier.

Conduit 2 certainly has some issues, but it's heartening to see that High Voltage Software took people's criticisms of the first title into account when developing this follow-up. Here's hoping that the third time—if there is one—will be prove to be the charm. **—JUSTIN C.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT GAMES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE COME BACK AS 3D CLASSICS ON THE NINTENDO 3DS SYSTEM?

JUSTIN CHENG

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles in Time. I want to see those Foot soldiers really fly at you when you toss them at the screen.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I pick NES Punch-Out!! because it would be awesome in 3D, and Mega Man 2 because I'll play that game in any form I can get.

CASEY LOE

The fantastic backdrops and overwrought drama of Final Fantasy VI would be awesome to experience in 3D.

CODY MARTIN

I think the Nintendo 3DS would do wonders for games like Super Mario RPG and Kirby's Dream Course.

CHRIS SLATE

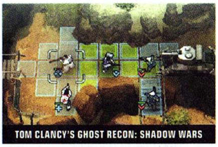
There can be only one correct answer: F-Zero. Although 3D depth at those speeds might melt my face off.

PHIL THEOBALD

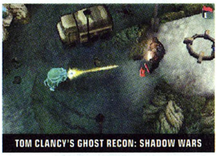
Yoshi's Island is one of the best looking (and playing) Super NES games out there, and it would look even better in 3D.

STEVE THOMASON

I'll go with Final Fantasy VI and Out of This World, mostly because I need a good excuse to revisit those games.



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: SHADOW WARS



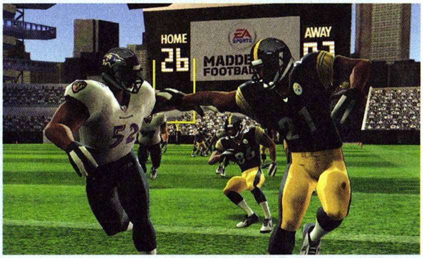
TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: SHADOW WARS

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: SHADOW WARS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT SOFIA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Though the Ghost Recon series is best known for squad-based military action, Shadow Wars takes a different approach and delivers a methodical, turn-based strategy sim. The results of this genre shakeup are quite positive; this is a complete, deep strategy game (offering varied character classes, primary and secondary weapons, terrain effects, an economy system, and all that jazz) that feels perfectly at home in the Tom Clancy universe of clandestine operations, military might, stealth, and convincing political intrigue. Despite the numerous layers of gameplay, it doesn't get overly complex; even if you're not a strategy fan you'll enjoy yourself thanks to good pacing, well-implemented tutorials, and three difficulty levels. Shadow Wars looks better than you might expect, too. If you merely view 2D screenshots of the game, you'll probably think it looks mediocre—certainly no better than a regular Nintendo DS title. But the use of 3D really adds to the experience; though the effect is fairly mild, it really makes the graphics pop and even improves gameplay by helping you get a handle on the terrain. Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars might not be getting as much attention as some other launch titles, but if you have any interest in strategy or military games, you won't want it to sneak by. **—CHRIS H.**



Incomplete; Pass

MADDEN NFL FOOTBALL

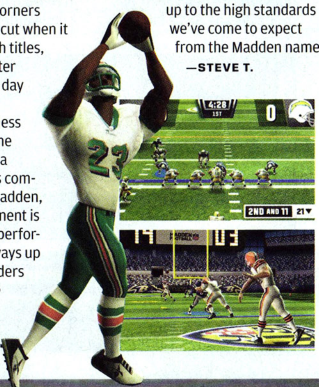
RATING: 6.0

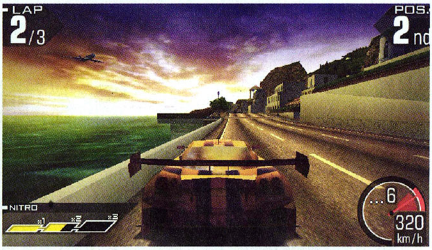
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA NORTH CAROLINA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

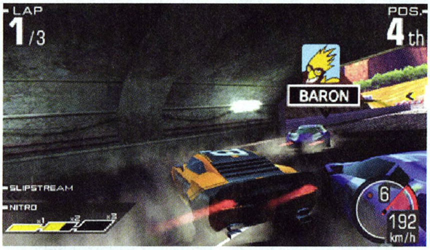
With the specter of a lockout looming over the 2011 NFL season, the virtual gridiron may be the only place for pigskin fans to get their fix this year. Sadly, Madden NFL Football for the Nintendo 3DS is likely to sate those cravings only as much as a Saltine satisfies the hunger of a starving man. It's basic sustenance, but there are certainly more-nourishing options out there.

The biggest shortcoming of this barebones effort is the complete lack of multiplayer, which is inexcusable for a sports game in this day and age. Granted, corners sometimes get cut when it comes to launch titles, but Street Fighter IV—also due on day one—includes both local wireless *and* global online play, as well as a cool StreetPass component. With Madden, your only opponent is the AI—and its performance isn't always up to snuff. Defenders frequently take poor angles on their pursuit of the ball carrier, for example, making it far too easy to run around the edges or return a punt down the sidelines. Mix in other niggling issues—such as the omission of a scramble button for the quarterback—and this starts to feel like a significant step backwards for the franchise.

To be fair, the game does include such recent additions to the series as the GameFlow play-calling system and the ability to draw your own receiver routes (in this case, via the touch screen). Plus, the 3D presentation is solid and the five-on-five arcade mode is ideal for quick bursts of on-the-go fun (though it would be even better if you could play with friends, of course). So EA didn't totally drop the ball; this offering just doesn't live up to the high standards we've come to expect from the Madden name. **—STEVE T.**







Still Runs Great

RIDGE RACER 3D

RATING: 8.0

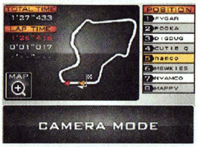
PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI
ESRB: EVERYONE

At the launch of a new video game system, people naturally focus on the fresh and flashy kinds of experiences that best showcase the new features of the hardware. But beyond the first few hours of showing off your new toy, there's a lot to be said for a game that simply delivers time-tested good fun. And as we've seen at many launches over the past 16 years, Ridge Racer games are a great way to break in a new system.

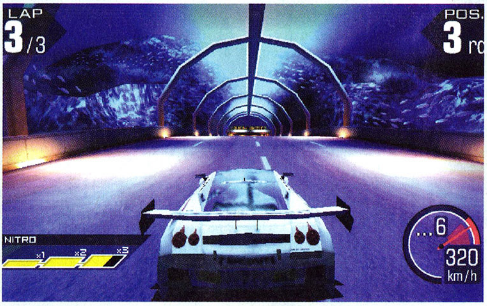
It's easy to take this series for granted, because what it does well, it's been doing for over a decade. To be fair, each new installment does consist of mostly repackaged content and adds only a handful of new courses and features. That's definitely the case with Ridge Racer 3D, as only about 20% of its tracks are new. But many of the old favorites rank among the best courses the racing genre has ever seen, and the series's signature element—its excessive, over-the-top use of drifting—hasn't lost any of its appeal over the years. Once you get the hang of the controls, it's a snap to slide through sharp turns with such grace that you enter a trance-like "zone" that pulls you in and makes it hard to pause your progress through the many races of each Gran Prix.

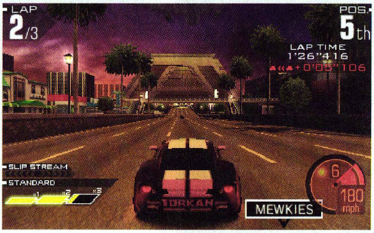
Although it's true that this Ridge Racer isn't a big departure from the norm, a few subtle differences between this game and previous ones impact gameplay. There is now a one-button drift option that can be toggled on to replace the series's traditional drift controls with ones more akin to Mario Kart. It's meant to open the game up to a wider audience, but it remains to be seen how effective this option will be. As a longtime Ridge Racer player, I found it quite difficult to make the mental switch and was quite happy to stick with the tried-and-true controls. But if the new style helps others enjoy the game—perhaps those who could never get the hang of Ridge Racer before—then it can only be a good thing.

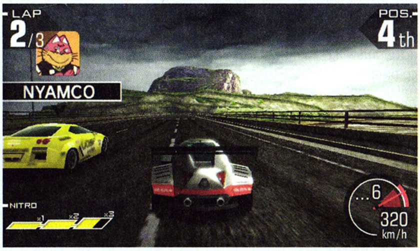
Slipstreaming—the ability to gain speed by positioning yourself directly behind another car—plays a bigger role than in previous games due to the more aggressive style of play in Ridge Racer 3D. Bumping a competitor or a side rail no longer causes a big drop in speed, and as a result, the taking of each position becomes a fierce back-and-forth battle as the cars constantly slipstream each other to slingshot ahead. This is especially true once you pass the basic Gran Prix, when the cars get faster and much more competitive. On the whole the heated competition is a good thing, but it can be frustrating to pass a car and blast ahead with nitro to find the rival car somehow still on your bumper. The opening Gran Prix might ease returning Ridge Racer players



[Above] The touch screen shows lap times and a course map.





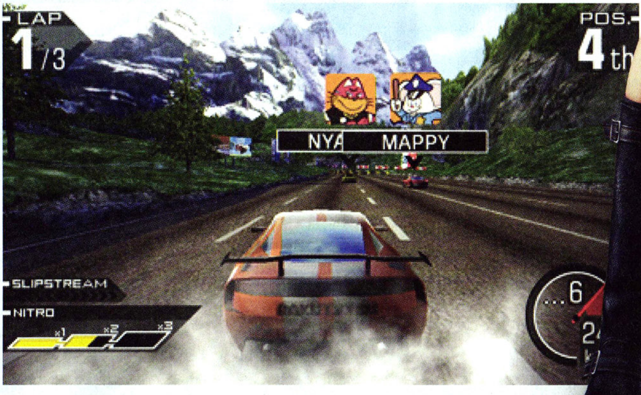


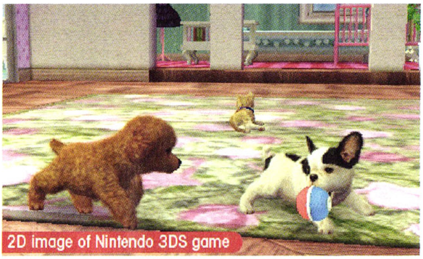
into thinking the game is a pushover, but make no mistake, the difficulty curve gets very steep.

The biggest changes in Ridge Racer 3D come from it being on the Nintendo 3DS handheld. At first I shunned the system's new Circle Pad in favor of the Control Pad, which is what I've always used in the past to precisely nudge my Ridge Racer cars into perfect racing lines. But once I reluctantly switched to the Circle Pad, I fell in love with its silky-smooth action and never went back. Likewise, the 3D visuals—while not necessarily used to mind-blowing effect in this game—add a depth that enhances the visceral appeal of smacking against solid-seeming cars. It takes some discipline to keep the Nintendo 3DS held still—and the 3D image intact—when the action gets fast and frantic. I sometimes found myself turning my body a bit while sliding through turns, which moved the screen out of its sweet spot and blurred the action at inopportune times. Also, it appears that having the 3D on sometimes impacts the game's frame rate, which can chug annoyingly when several cars of a fast class meet on a highly detailed part of a track. But despite these issues, I still found the trade-offs to be in favor of 3D. Even after many hours of play time, switching the effect on instantly made the action feel more exciting and new, whereas turning it off made me feel like I was missing out.

Ridge Racer 3D also takes advantage of the handheld's StreetPass feature, wirelessly exchanging ghost-car data with other Nintendo 3DS owners who pass by with their systems in Sleep mode. This is a charming use of the technology, but it doesn't make up for the lack of online play and leaderboards, which were made standard in the series's last couple of console releases. Local wireless multiplayer (up to four players) is as nice as you'd expect, but those seeking a wider quantity and quality of challengers will have to make do.

Despite its shortcomings, Ridge Racer 3D is one of the Nintendo 3DS system's meatiest launch titles, and by far the series's best showing on a Nintendo platform. Those who are new to the franchise will find a treasure trove of amazing courses to learn, and top-notch drift controls that turn each corner into a stylish stunt. Returning Ridge Racer champions will find just enough new reasons to work through another long and grueling—yet highly satisfying—series of thrilling Gran Prix tournaments. —**CHRIS S.**





2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

Same Dogs, New Tricks

NINTENDOGS + CATS

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

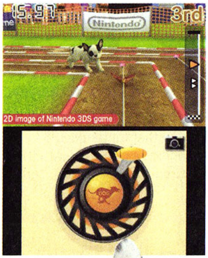
A game as innovative and influential as the first Nintendogs is a tough act to follow—the original pet simulation kick-started an entire genre filled with cuddly copycats, and legitimized the then-unproven Nintendo DS with clever use of the system's groundbreaking features. Many fans have been awaiting the expected sequel, but can more of the same ever satisfy the way the seminal game did? Perhaps not, but by once again capitalizing on the added functionality of a new handheld, Nintendo has certainly improved upon the original experience with nintendogs + cats.

This kind of game requires an emotional connection to work—if you don't care about spending time with your pet, then there's no reason to play. The extra horsepower of the Nintendo 3DS system breathes new life into the game's polygonal puppies with many subtle yet effective touches, such as adorable, super-realistic eyes and fuzzy coats of fur that you can practically feel as you scratch them with the stylus. The first-generation DS dogs seem primitive in comparison, more like animated toys than the real thing. And a bit of new magic is to be found by interacting with your pet in 3D, which gives him true form and substance, as if your Nintendo 3DS were a window through which you could watch your pooch play. The effect is truly remarkable, especially when your pup props his paws upon the screen for some up-close petting. The extra realism helps you build a better bond with your four-legged friends, who quickly come to feel like part of the family.

When you choose your first puppy and bring him to your house, you're thrown headfirst into the world of pet ownership and given several things to do. Once you've cuddled up to your dog enough to make him feel at home, you can feed him, bathe him, take him for walks, take him shopping, toss some toys around, snap some photos, participate in competitions, and more. And the really interesting bit is that all of these things tie together. For example, dogs that are shown a lot of attention will respond better to commands, and those that are full of food and water will perform better in athletic events. Your pet is always evolving, although often at an unnoticeable pace; there's a fairly complex strategy game hidden beneath the cuddly cuteness.

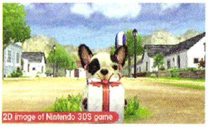
But despite the impressive array of possibilities, you find that after the initial whirlwind half-hour, the game grinds to a very slow pace. Your primary long-term goals consist of winning the tournament cups and collecting items such as toys and furniture. Each of the three tournaments—in which you throw flying discs to your dog, have him chase a lure in a race against other dogs, and have him performs tricks—can be played only twice a day, so that limits your cash flow, which in turn slows the progress of a lot of other things. (Don't bother setting the system clock ahead; it won't fool the game.) There isn't much to do in the meantime except the same old stuff—mainly pet your dog and take him for a walk—which loses its appeal with repetition. The eventual introduction of a cat spices things up a little, but you can't do nearly as much with it as you can with a dog; it's mostly there for your puppy to interact with. It helps to pace yourself when playing; this is a game best experienced in daily snack-sized servings.

The gamer in me still hungers for more of a traditional video game structure—more explicit challenges, goals, and rewards—and I don't think those would necessarily come at the expense of the game's playful, laid-back atmosphere. But as it is, nintendogs + cats is still worth a look by everyone but the most black-hearted animal-haters. It's a technical showstopper, and it would be a disservice to sell it short as simply a curiosity for the kiddies. **—CHRIS S.**



2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

2D image of Nintendo 3DS game



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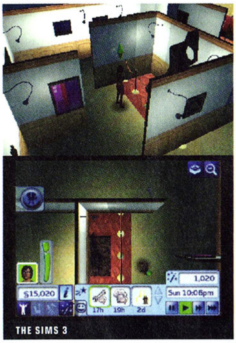
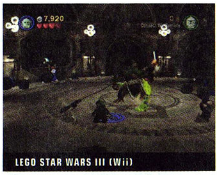
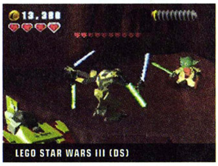

THE SIMS 3


LEGO STAR WARS III (Wii)


LEGO STAR WARS III (DS)

THE SIMS 3

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **THE SIMS STUDIO**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Make Sims and keep them happy—that's what The Sims 3 is all about. You can choose to ignore your Sims' desires (or simply try to off your Sims), of course, but helping them achieve their dreams makes for a more fulfilling long-term experience. Everything's mostly solid from a gameplay standpoint, but touch-screen inputs can be misrecognized on occasion. Another issue is that using the Nintendo 3DS system's features to activate Karma Powers (you can shake the handheld to make it rain simoleons, for instance) feels gimmicky. And the 3D visuals—while neat (if framey)—are almost forgettable; your focus is almost always on the touch screen, as you manage everything there. Still, these are more annoyances than true problems. **—JUSTIN C.**

LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

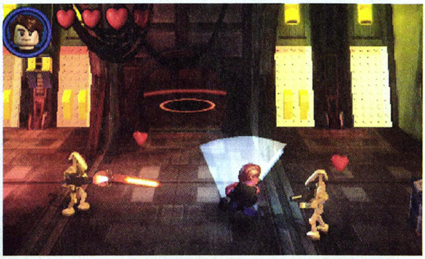
I'm concerned about burnout whenever a new LEGO title comes along—after all, the basic formula hasn't changed all that much since 2005's LEGO Star Wars: The Video Game for GameCube. But developer Traveller's Tales is usually successful in adding new features that bring me back for more. In LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars (based on the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* TV show), Scene Swap—wherein two characters complete tasks in different areas at the same time—and the real-time-strategy-esque Ground Battles help give the game a grander and more epic feel than prior LEGO Star Wars titles, which goes a long way toward making The Clone Wars my favorite of the bunch. **—JUSTIN C.**

LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

LEGO Star Wars III, which is based on the popular Clone Wars animated series, doesn't deviate much from the other titles in the LEGO game library. As usual, the gameplay focuses on taking advantage of the many characters' different skills to maneuver through each stage. As a family game, its difficulty level is low; the enjoyment comes from discovering all of the game's secrets and unlocking its many playable characters (over 100!). The game's goofy sense of humor adds to the fun, as familiar scenarios play out in unexpected ways (you probably weren't expecting to see a battle droid on a toilet). Unfortunately, the humor during the multiple cinema sequences is hampered by the overly grainy video. If you happen to be debating between the DS and Nintendo 3DS versions of the game, it's worth noting that though the DS version doesn't look as good, the level design and overall gameplay is almost identical between the two. **—PHIL T.**



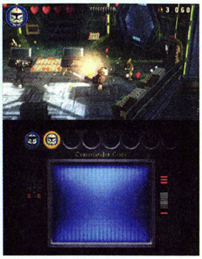
The Lighter Side of the Force

LEGO STAR WARS III: THE CLONE WARS

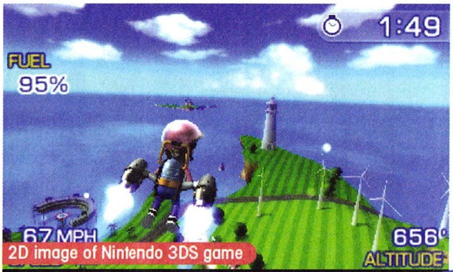
RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

With both the "classic" and prequel Star Wars films covered twice already, it seemed like we had run out of options for new LEGO games based on George Lucas's beloved universe. Luckily, the new Clone Wars animated series gives us another excuse to head into a blocky version of that galaxy far, far away. Covering the first season of the TV series (with a brief detour into season two), LEGO Star Wars III retains the same standards that have made the LEGO games so popular. That means relatively simple gameplay that focuses on using the abilities of individual characters to make your way through each puzzle-filled level. A few new moves (including the Jedi's wall-scaling triangle jump and the ability to slice through certain walls with a lightsaber) spice things up a bit, but it's mostly the same as it ever was. A handful of vehicle levels add a bit of variety, but they're hampered a bit by sluggish controls.



The action looks fantastic on the Nintendo 3DS handheld, and the system's 3D effect gives each colorful setting a real feeling of depth. Amusingly enough, the effect works especially well on the trademark scrolling text that precedes each level. This version of the game also features a few neat extras. By using the system's StreetPass feature, you can earn extra studs (the in-game currency), and Play Coins can be used to unlock some exclusive characters that fans of the TV series will really appreciate. If the LEGO formula has grown stale for you, The Clone Wars probably won't freshen things up much, but it's a well-made and enjoyable adventure with a terrific sense of humor and plenty of secrets to discover. **—PHIL T.**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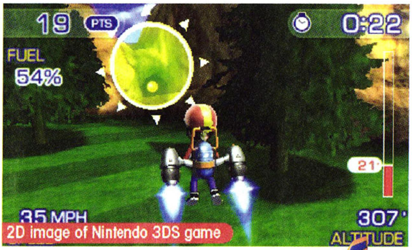
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game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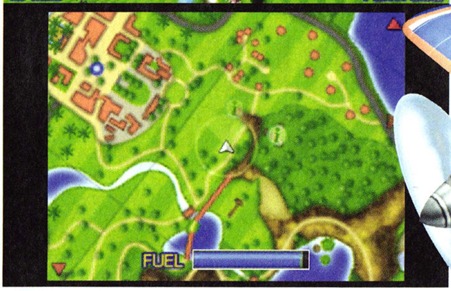
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game



Nintendo
Nintendo

Smooth Skies Again

PILOTWINGS RESORT

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **MONSTER GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The Super NES and Nintendo 64 both launched with Pilotwings games that served as excellent showcases for the platforms' then state-of-the-art 3D-graphics capabilities. I'm not sure why that tradition was abandoned, but I'm happy to see it revived, and happier still that Pilotwings Resort lives up to the legacy of its predecessors. It's hard to imagine a better introduction to the new era of 3D gaming than a quick tour of Wuhu Island in the game's Free Flight Mode: The controls for most of the aircraft are easy to pick up and play with, the island is full of interesting nooks and crannies to discover, and the 3D has an actual effect on gameplay, making it noticeably easier to judge distances. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the game looks utterly gorgeous.

The Free Flight Mode allows you to simply cruise the island in an aircraft of your choice, gathering location data, snagging collectibles, flying through gold rings, and so on. It's one big collect-a-thon, but any excuse to soar through the streets and secret tunnels of Wuhu Island is welcome. Collecting the prizes unlocks new features, like the ability to explore at different times of day. That mode is my favorite part of Pilotwings Resort, but the meat of the game is the more than 30 missions, organized in tiers from Bronze to Platinum. Players are awarded up to three stars for completing each rank, and when enough stars are earned within one rank, the next one opens up. (Unlocking higher ranks in Mission Flight Mode also unlocks collectibles in Free Flight Mode.) At first the missions are the typical Pilotwings fare of flying

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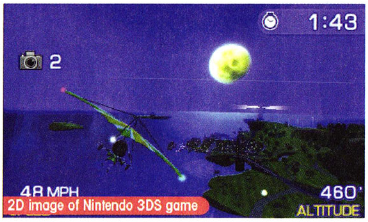
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game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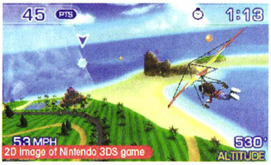
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

Whether challenging a mission or flying free, enjoy Wuhu island at your own pace.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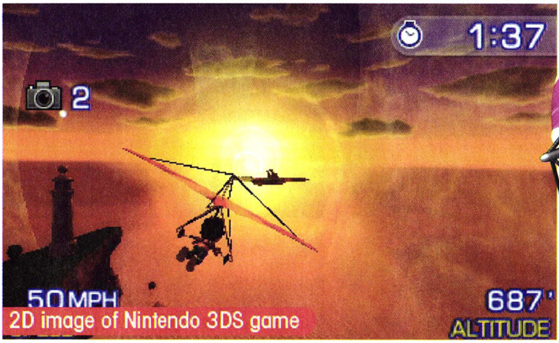
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game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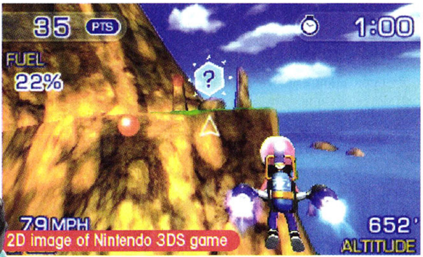
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

through rings and shooting down balloons. But instead of filling the advanced missions with more rings, sharper turns, and less time on the clock, the developers managed to come up with a unique gimmick for almost every mission, such as spraying water on campfires, copying the tricks of a guide plane, knocking hot-air balloons into a goal, and returning baby UFOs to their mothership. A handful of secret vehicles adds to the variety, and those vehicles' all-too-brief missions provide several of the game's highlights.

Most of the missions in Pilotwings Resort don't have the depth necessary to make them fun to endlessly replay in search of higher scores, and even Wuhu Island's tropical beauty will eventually leave you yearning for a change of scenery. The game does an excellent job of providing new excuses to enjoy the smooth gameplay and 3D sights (however, there isn't much to enjoy about the synthy jazz soundtrack), but never quite cracks the "pleasant" barrier to evolve into something truly compelling.

Pilotwings Resort delivers exactly what it aims to: impressive 3D gameplay, intuitive controls that allow anyone to pick it up and play, and plenty of bite-size diversions to fill up those idle moments at work or school. You could do a lot worse than having Pilotwings Resort be the first game you slide into your brand-new Nintendo 3DS—just don't expect it to still be there a month later. **—CASEY L.**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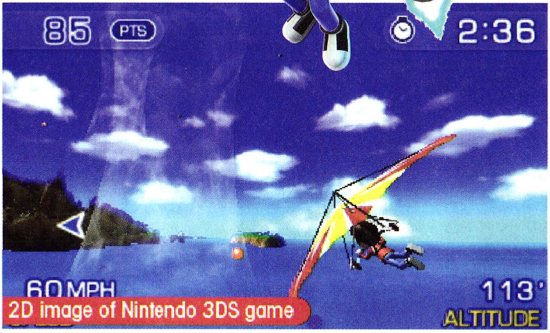
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game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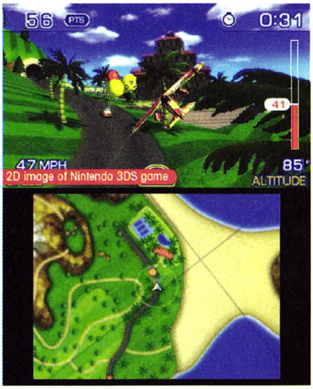
ALTITUDE
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game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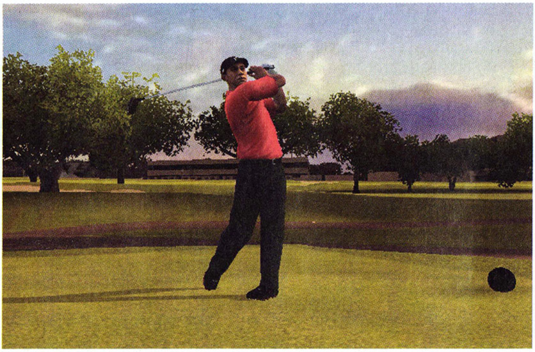
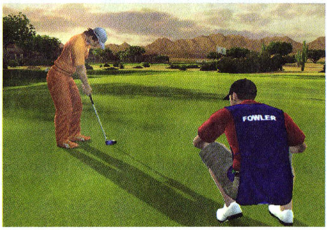
ALTITUDE
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

[Above] When hang gliding, thermals offer a boost to help you gain altitude. [Right] Some challenges are taken from the Island Flyover activity in Wii Sports Resort, such as popping balloons.





Refined to a Tee

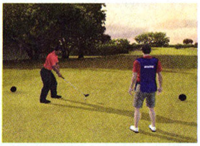
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 12: THE MASTERS

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA TIBURON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Once upon a time—before his Perkins escapades were brought to light—Tiger Woods dominated his profession on an annual basis. For the man himself, those days may forever be in the rearview mirror, but the video game bearing his name continues its impressive reign. As Wii sports sims go, Tiger is still on top.

New for this year's edition—or any golf game ever, for that matter—is the inclusion of the prestigious Masters tournament and the hallowed grounds of the Augusta National Golf Club. Every serious duffer dreams of playing at Augusta, and this is as close as the vast majority will ever get. Every detail of the legendary course has been painstakingly re-created, and like everything else in the game, it looks phenomenal. At this point, the talented folks at EA Tiburon are probably pushing the Wii hardware as far as it can go.



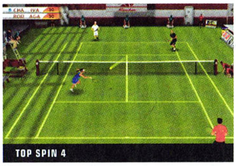
Sadly, your caddie is nowhere to be found on the mini-golf course.

The Masters also serves as sort of the overriding theme for the entire package. Two of the featured new modes—Masters Moments and Tiger at the Masters—allow players to relive highlights from the event's storied history. What's more, capturing the green jacket at Augusta is now your ultimate goal in Career mode, which has been renamed Road to the Masters. To go along with that new moniker, the developers have streamlined things a bit, making it easier to manage the myriad facets of your golfer's career and giving you a clearer sense of his progression. It's not that the experience has been watered down; everything is just easier to digest than it was before.

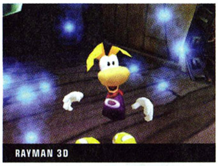
The same philosophy is presumably behind this year's other big addition: caddies. An AI companion now accompanies you on the links, and before every swing, you have the option to let him line up your shot. He'll pick your club, set your target, and provide the recommended swing power; all you have to do is execute. Actually, in many cases you also need to choose between a "safe" option and an "aggressive" one. Regardless, it's a great way to speed up the game for players who just want to swing away while allowing those who enjoy the cerebral aspect of figuring out the best approach to still do so themselves. If you do use the caddie, though, be sure to conduct your own quick reality check. His advice is solid most of the time, but he's not perfect.

In terms of core gameplay, the excellent swing mechanics from PGA Tour 11 remain largely unchanged, and coupled with the Wii MotionPlus accessory, again offer an unparalleled level of authenticity. This installment does add support for the Wii Balance Board accessory, which sounds great in concept, but as with most applications of that particular peripheral, isn't much fun in practice.

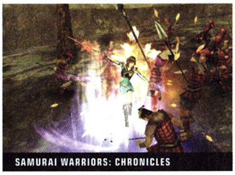
If there's one criticism to be leveled against PGA Tour 12, it's that the advancements aren't nearly as significant as they've been the past few seasons. That's not to say this isn't a great game; on the contrary, it's the best in the series. But the relatively modest step forward means it's not necessarily a crucial purchase if you already own last year's version. —**STEVE T.**



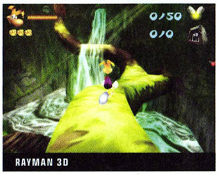
TOP SPIN 4



RAYMAN 3D



SAMURAI WARRIORS: CHRONICLES



RAYMAN 3D

TOP SPIN 4

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **2K CZECH**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Whether your knowledge of tennis is limited to Wii Sports or you're a seasoned vet, Top Spin 4's action is satisfying. As you venture from amateur to pro status by winning tournaments and challenges, you'll be awarded with skill points to make your custom-created character truly unique (a big improvement on Top Spin 3, which had no career mode or character-creation options to speak of). Additionally, aside from the rather dull minigames, the multiplayer action is fun. It's just unfortunate that beating the AI opponent seems overly tough regardless of setting, making advancement in career mode especially frustrating at crucial moments. And it's not a major issue, but I do wish the graphics were a bit better. **—CODY M.**

SAMURAI WARRIORS: CHRONICLES

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **TECMO KOEI**
DEVELOPER: **OMEGA FORCE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

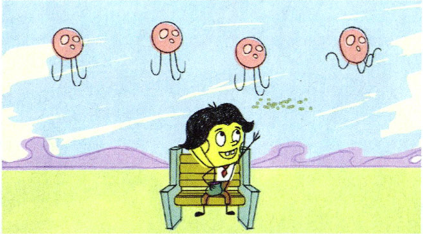
As there has been a seemingly endless number of Samurai/Dynasty Warriors titles, you probably have a working idea of what Samurai Warriors: Chronicles is all about—hacking and slashing thousands of enemies. The franchise's Nintendo 3DS debut has plenty of that, of course, but the game also surprised me with its mostly solid graphics (aside from the series's usual draw-distance issues), Story mode, and character-swapping gameplay. You create a custom warrior who interacts with—via chatting and fighting—the key figures from Japan's Warring States period. But instead of controlling just one character on the battlefield, you can switch between up to four combatants at will, which adds strategy and helps keep up the game's pace. **—JUSTIN C.**

RAYMAN 3D

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The somewhat deceptively titled Rayman 3D is actually an adaptation of 2000's Rayman 2: The Great Escape for Dreamcast. On one hand, this is a pretty basic port of an 11-year-old game. On the other hand, The Great Escape has aged remarkably well and remains one of the greatest platformers of all time. It's beautiful, varied, and uniquely charming, with a lovably bizarre cast of characters. This was a labor of love for Michel Ancel's team, and it's imbued with a sense of magic and creativity reminiscent of Nintendo's best work. The addition of 3D is nice, but those who have already experienced the joys of Rayman 2 can probably move on. The rest of you should take this opportunity to see what you've been missing. **—STEVE T.**



Surprisingly Sponge-Tastic

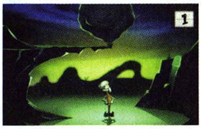
SPONGEBOB SQUIGGLEPANTS

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

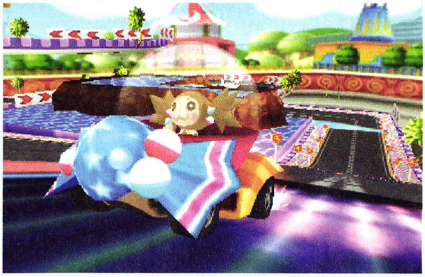
SpongeBob SquigglePants, designed for THQ's uDraw GameTablet, takes a refreshing turn from the typical SpongeBob game formula (largely unremarkable platformers). The game has you playing through fast-paced sets of microgames (frantic five-second challenges) similar to those featured in Nintendo's WarioWare franchise. Each set has a separate SpongeBob art theme, with cleverly entertaining designs that pay homage to memorable SpongeBob episodes as well as retro video games.

The uDraw GameTablet combines functions of both the Wii Remote controller and the Nintendo DS stylus for a unique and amusing experience. One moment you'll be required to rapidly flick, tap, drag, or draw on the pad with the uDraw pen, then you'll have to quickly transition to grabbing the tablet by its sides and shaking or tilting it.



Although the overall experience is enjoyable, the first play-through is unexpectedly abrupt. You'll be hooked from the first set, blow through the next few in an hour or so, and then the credits will roll while you scratch your head wondering where the rest of your game went. New microgames *are* added after you finish the main sets once (you're required to play them again to earn medals and unlock minigames) which adds a nice touch of replayability, but the microgames are often inconsistent in difficulty and thus a select few are unbeatable when the pace speeds up. Further adding irritation is the fact that the sound level fluctuates dramatically, so you constantly have to adjust the TV's volume.

However, the creative microgames and style of play presented in SpongeBob SquigglePants are delightful additions to the genre. Though it doesn't necessarily warrant the purchase of a uDraw GameTablet, it's a title worth exploring if you already have the pleasure of owning the peripheral. **—CODY M.**



A Banana Bonanza

SUPER MONKEY BALL 3D

RATING: 7.5

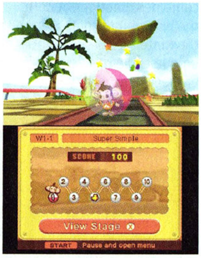
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

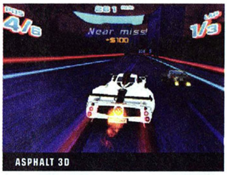
With this super-simian series approaching its 10th anniversary, you might wonder if the Super Monkey Ball experience has run its course. But with Super Monkey Ball 3D, Sega has found a way to continue the fun.

This game maintains the same basic formula as previous iterations—you direct your sphere-entrapped monkey to each level's goal by tilting the environment. To do so, I prefer using the fluid and responsive Circle Pad controls. There's a motion-control option on offer, but many curves you're required to maneuver are simply too precision-dependent for it to work well, at least without wildly tilting your Nintendo 3DS handheld. Besides, the movement completely kills the 3D effect.

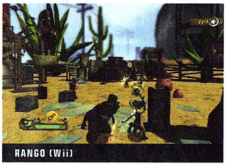
In addition to the traditional simian-rolling, Super Monkey Ball 3D also brings back Monkey Race and Monkey Fight (both of which support up to four players, albeit via local wireless only). Of course, Monkey Race is a blatant Mario Kart clone in almost every sense, but it's still a fun little diversion. I did have a bit of trouble successfully executing the Spin-and-Dash mechanic, which instantly allows you to change the direction you're heading and is accompanied by a burst of speed. The Super Smash Bros.-inspired Monkey Fight—wherein you choose a character and brawl for the most bananas—is mildly entertaining, but with only three levels, it feels more like a slightly beefed-up minigame than an equal ingredient in the game's three-in-one recipe.

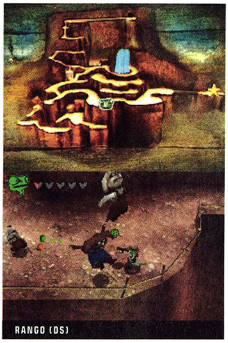
Still, the Super Monkey action here proves to be a satisfying addition to the franchise. Monkey Race and Monkey Fight don't stand firm separately, but it's nice to have the variety. When one component becomes dull you have others to keep you interested, which makes for a refreshing Monkey Ball experience. **—CODY M.**





ASPHALT 3D


RANGO (Wii)


RANGO (DS)

ASPHALT 3D

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **GAMELOFT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Despite appropriating elements from the popular Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit and Burnout franchises, Asphalt 3D is an unexceptional arcade-racing title. The in-game cars and motorcycles resemble their real-life counterparts, but the graphics are unspectacular on the whole. There's nothing really *wrong* with the gameplay; the driving works fine for the most part, and I especially like the HyperSpeed feature (a temporary speed boost that makes you go so fast that you are invincible and can total any vehicles in your way). The game offers a handful of events in which to participate, ranging from racing to outrunning cops to wrecking opponents' cars. Unfortunately, it gets old as you play them over and over again in the 70-event-long Career mode. **—JUSTIN C.**

RANGO

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **PARAMOUNT DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT**
DEVELOPER: **BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Title character Rango may tell tall tales of adventure, but his video game escapes in this lackluster release are about as exciting as the name of the town in which they're set: Dirt. When you're not exploring invisible-wall-infested environments, you're forced to engage in repetitive gallery-style and on-rail shooting segments that long overstay their welcome. And when I say *exploring*, I mean that in the loosest sense of the word; there's no reason to attempt to stray off the beaten path, and the only collectibles come in the form of tokens that serve little purpose aside from giving you something to collect. The background graphics and lighting effects can be impressive—though such work is wasted on mediocre gameplay. **—CODY M.**

RANGO

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **PARAMOUNT DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT**
DEVELOPER: **BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

In stark contrast to its Wii counterpart, Rango for the Nintendo DS is a relatively enticing action-RPG. Throughout our hero's quest (which is set after the events of the film), you can swap between four upgradeable classes on command, allowing him to adapt to meet any objective. And unlike many movie tie-ins, Rango has a pleasantly puzzle-laden campaign, as well as a generous number of side quests and achievements that add depth to the game. Still, it can be incredibly frustrating at times: enemies can corner you easily, and often the sheer quantity and placement of your foes is overkill. Additionally, the Golden Bullet (a shot from your peashooter used to unlock timed gates from a distance) is ridiculously awkward to control. **—CODY M.**

WWEHD
WWEHD

Old School of Hard Knocks

WWE ALL STARS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **SUBDUED SOFTWARE/THQ SAN DIEGO**
ESRB: **TEEN**

WWE All Stars is kind of like the Ultimate Warrior of pro-wrestling games. It's got a lot of energy, it stands out from the crowd, and it delivers quite a spectacle, but beneath the flashy exterior it's got a few screws loose and it doesn't exhibit an abundance of technical prowess.

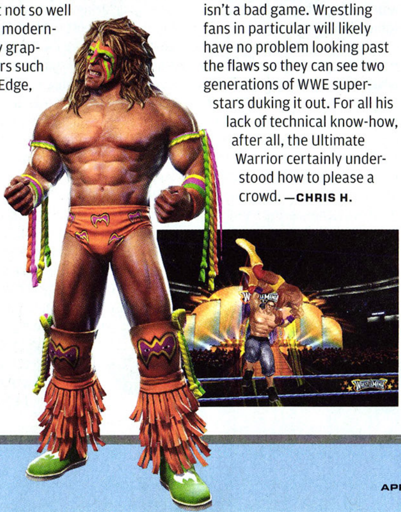
On the plus side, All Stars certainly differentiates itself from other WWE games on the market. It's faster and much more arcadey, and the roster—evenly split between current stars and legendary WWE performers—should appeal to a wide audience. Even my dad (who refers to John Cena and Randy Orton as "cheap guys") was intrigued by the prospect of playing as characters like Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Bret Hart, and Mr. Perfect (although he laments the absence of Papa Shango and Kamala the Ugandan Giant). The prospect of putting together your own fantasy matchups is pretty cool for longtime wrestling fans, and the developers deserve big props for assembling some top-notch superstar-versus-legend video packages.

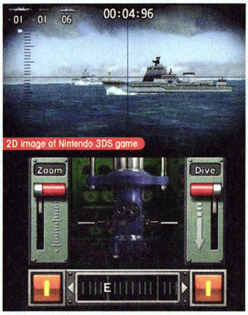
The four character classes are effective, offering distinct abilities for brawlers, grapplers, high-fliers, and big men; if you play to your character class's strengths, you always feel like you have a chance of defeating your opponent. The game offers a fair amount of depth, too; though it's easy to execute basic grapples, strikes, and meter-based special moves, you'll need to put in some practice before you figure out each character's chain combos. (Unfortunately, this also keeps the game from being very newbie-friendly.) And though there aren't many modes and match types, what's here generally works well. It's incredibly easy to switch between different opponents in multiman matches, and the cage matches are a blast. Too bad the tag-team mode in Path of Champions supports only a single player.

Although the title features several good ideas and fun play mechanics, the gameplay comes across as sloppy at times. Whereas characters perform with an almost scientific crispness in the SmackDown vs. Raw games, actions in All Stars often feel imprecise. You'll bounce away from opponents for seemingly no reason, it's hard to consistently execute certain moves, and the action button tends to have a mind of its own; you'll exit the ring when you want to climb the turnbuckle, you'll climb when you want to go for a pin, and you'll pin when you want to pick up an object. Other controls are needlessly complicated; there's no need for two different counter buttons, for example.

The visuals, meanwhile, are a mixed bag. I thought the exaggerated physiques worked well for the cartoony, larger-than-life '80s characters (especially Sgt. Slaughter), but not so well for modern-day grapplers such as Edge, Sheamus, and The Miz. The characters look even goofier when they walk down to the ring wearing bulky entrance attire. John Morrison looks particularly silly, as his coat seems to be glued to his body. But while appreciation for the visual style is largely a matter of personal taste, I can't imagine anyone will enjoy the crunching sound effects that constantly play as you maneuver around the ring; it sounds like somebody chomping on a mouthful of Fruity Pebbles directly into a microphone.

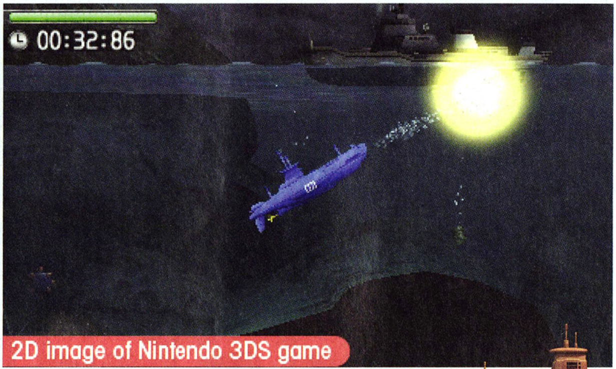
Even with a lot of areas in need of polish, WWE All Stars isn't a bad game. Wrestling fans in particular will likely have no problem looking past the flaws so they can see two generations of WWE superstars duking it out. For all his lack of technical know-how, after all, the Ultimate Warrior certainly understood how to please a crowd. —**CHRIS H.**



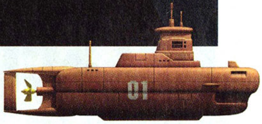


2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

[Above] In Periscope Strike, you look around by physically moving the system.



2D image of Nintendo 3DS game



Dive, Dive, Dive!

STEEL DIVER

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

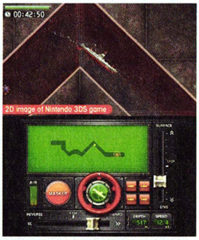
Unlike the other two Nintendo-published launch titles—nintendogs + cats and Pilotwings Resort—Steel Diver is completely original. I don't just mean that there haven't been previous iterations of Steel Diver; I also mean that it is unlike anything else on the Nintendo 3DS system.

It is the year 19XX—a nice nod to the games of yesteryear, which were often set in that ambiguous time period. As part of a fleet called Steel Diver, you command a submarine (choosing from three different sizes: compact, midsize, and large), and your goal is to defeat the forces of a conquering nation. This means that you can capture a base (by navigating your sub through danger-filled waters to the stage's end goal) or go one-on-one against a massive flagship. The game is not afraid to dip into the outlandish, either, such as when you fight a ginormous nautilus.

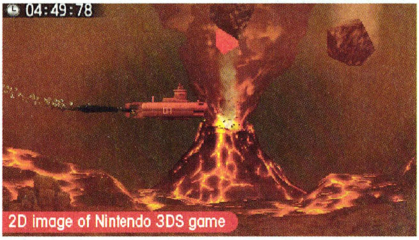
During these missions, everything is controlled with the stylus. On the touch screen, there is a slider each for vertical and horizontal movement, and touch-screen buttons control the torpedoes and the homing-torpedo-disabling Masker. Using the Masker consumes air; fortunately, you can replenish your air supply and repair your sub by surfacing. There are a lot of components to keep track of—and even more if you choose a midsize or large sub, as they have a steering wheel to alter the vessel's angle—so it can be a challenge to multitask, especially in the heat of battle. But it feels immensely gratifying once you get the hang of things.

With only seven missions (all of which have a time limit, ranging from 10 to 15 minutes), Steel Diver's Campaign mode is on the short side—even if you take into account the fact that you have to play through each mission with all three types of submarines in order to unlock the final stages, and that there is a more difficult Expert version of every level. Thankfully, the game has more to offer than just its Campaign mode. There's also the eight-level-long Time Trial; the turn-based Steel Commander (which supports up to two players via Download Play); and the first-person Periscope Strike, wherein you use the system's Gyro Sensor to target baddies by physically moving yourself and the handheld 360 degrees. (You'll play a 30-second version of Periscope Strike after each Campaign mission to unlock Decals, which can grant you certain advantages, such as reducing the amount of damage you take from air strikes.) These modes aren't particularly lengthy, but they do provide some welcome variety.

Besides, Steel Diver is designed to be enjoyed in small chunks, not all at once. And like the old-school titles it references in its story, the game is meant to be played multiple times. Overall, I enjoyed my undersea voyage quite a bit; it may have been short, but it was also very sweet. —**JUSTIN C.**



2D image of Nintendo 3DS game



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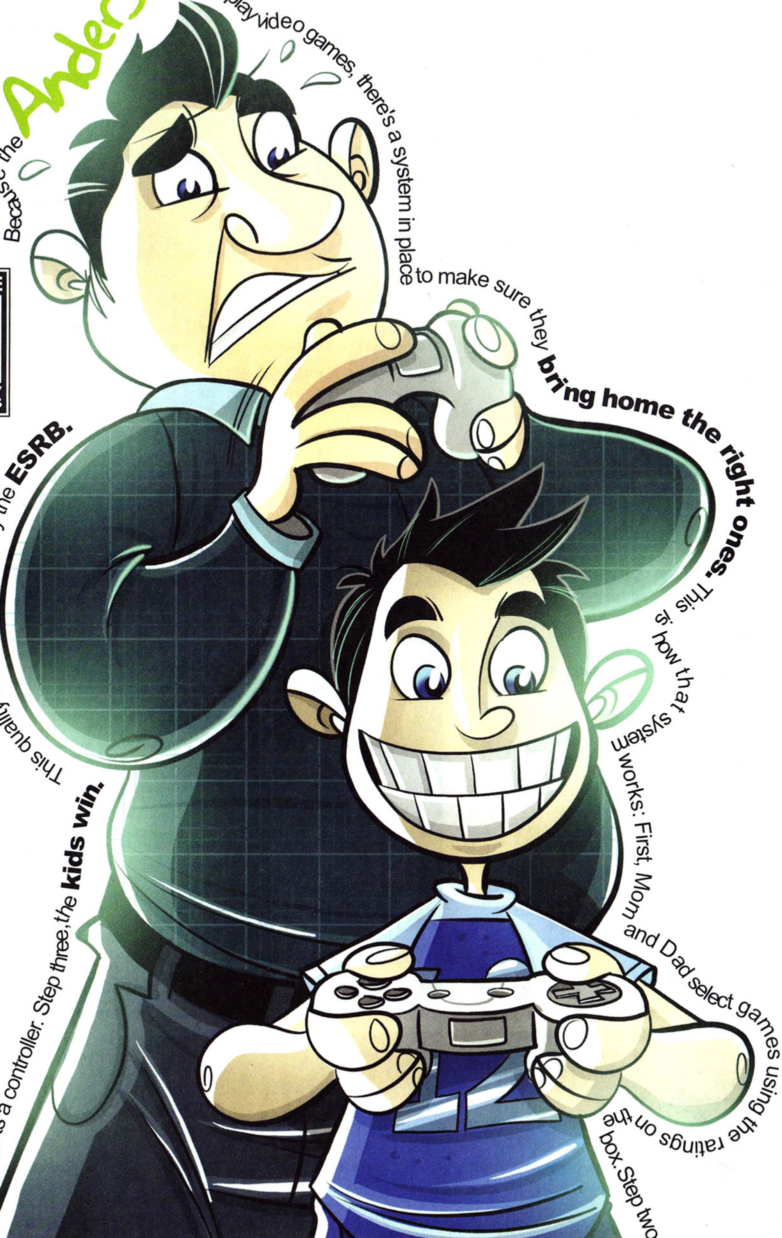

Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.**

This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
®
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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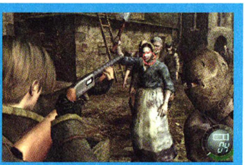
REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Video Game	7.0	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	E10+
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
Create	5.0	Electronic Arts	262	E
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Deca Sports 3	4.5	Hudson	261	E
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DJ Hero 2	9.0	Activision	262	T
Donkey Kong Country Returns	8.5	Nintendo	262	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 11	8.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
FlingSmash	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Flip's Twisted World	6.0	Majesco	260	E
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
GoldenEye 007	8.5	Activision	262	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guilty Party	7.0	Disney	259	E
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	8.0	MTV	261	T
Gunblade NY & LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	5.5	Sega	259	T
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	4.0	Electronic Arts	262	T
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.5	XSEED	259	E
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Kirby's Epic Yarn	8.5	Nintendo	261	E
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	257	E10+
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	4.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	5.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	T
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Metroid: Other M	8.5	Nintendo	259	T
Michael Jackson: The Experience	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
MySims Skyheroes	7.5	Electronic Arts	260	E10+
Namco Museum Megamix	5.0	Namco Bandai	261	E
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	4.5	Tomy	262	E10+
NBA 2K11	6.5	2K Sports	261	E
NBA Jam	9.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
NHL Slapshot	6.0	Electronic Arts	259	E
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Pac-Man Party	4.5	Namco Bandai	262	E10+
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Raving Rabbids Travel In Time	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Rock Band 3	9.0	MTV	261	T
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Samurai Warriors 3	6.0	Nintendo	260	T
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	7.0	Capcom	261	T
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Sid Meier's Pirates!	8.5	2K Games	260	E10+
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic Colors	9.0	Sega	261	E
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	8.0	Activision	260	T
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	8.0	LucasArts	261	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Swords	5.0	Majesco	260	T
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	6.0	Ubisoft	262	T
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T
Trauma Team	8.0	Atlus	255	T
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Wii Party	7.5	Nintendo	260	E
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	7.5	THQ	262	T

MORE ON:

RESIDENT EVIL 4: Wii EDITION



With the Resident Evil franchise celebrating its 15th anniversary, this seems a good time to remind everyone (ages 17 and up, of course) that Resident Evil 4 is quite possibly the greatest achievement in the history of the universe. Seriously. Like every single minute of the game is just mind-blowingly amazing. I love you, Resident Evil 4. —STEVE T.

MORE ON:

TRAUMA TEAM

Trauma Team seemed to slip under a lot of people's radar when it was released last year, which is a shame. It's easily the most diverse and user-friendly installment yet in the Trauma Center series, and it contains all the excitement and life-or-death intrigue of a prime-time medical drama. Some of the six medical disciplines featured in the game are better than others, but overall it's a quality effort that's well worth your time. —CHRIS H.

65
VITALS
LIMIT
OK

Okay, that should do it!

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	8.0	Capcom	252	T
Again	7.0	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1	5.0	Atari	261	E
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Beat City	8.5	THQ	254	E
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Crafting Mama	7.0	Majesco	261	E
Crime Scene	5.0	SouthPeak	253	M
Dawn of Heroes	7.5	Majesco	253	E10+
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Deca Sports DS	5.5	Hudson	253	E
Dementium II	8.0	SouthPeak	255	M
Despicable Me: The Game—Minion Mayhem	7.0	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	9.0	Nintendo	257	E10+
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	8.5	Altus	260	E10+
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	8.0	Square Enix	260	E10+
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	8.0	Nintendo	262	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	6.0	Natsume	258	E
Infinite Space	8.0	Sega	253	T
Iron Man 2	6.5	Sega	256	E10+
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.0	XSEED	259	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
The Last Airbender	7.5	THQ	257	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
Lufia : Curse of the Sinistrals	8.0	Natsume	260	E10+
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	7.5	Nintendo	262	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	9.0	Capcom	256	E
Monster Tale	8.0	Majesco	265	E
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	5.0	Tomy	262	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	9.0	Aksys	262	M
Okamiden	8.0	Capcom	265	E10+
Picross 3D	7.5	Nintendo	255	E
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Black Version	9.0	Nintendo	265	E
Pokémon HeartGold Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	7.0	Nintendo	260	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon White Version	9.0	Nintendo	265	E
Professor Layton and the Unwound Future	9.0	Nintendo	260	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	7.5	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Radiant Historia	8.5	Atlus	265	E10+
Ragnarok DS	5.0	XSEED	252	E10+
River City Soccer Hooligans	7.0	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	6.0	Aksys	258	T
Rooms: The Main Building	7.0	Hudson	253	E
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	8.5	Natsume	262	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	8.0	Atlus	253	M
Sonic Colors	7.5	Sega	261	E
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	6.0	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	7.0	Sega	253	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	7.0	Activision	260	E10+
Squishy Tank	8.0	Natsume	253	E
Super Scribblenauts	8.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	261	E
Tetris Party Deluxe	8.5	Majesco	256	E
Transformers: War for Cybertron	7.0	Activision	258	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	8.5	Nintendo	253	E

MORE ON:

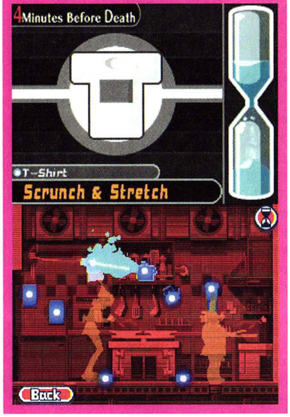
SUPER MARIO 64 DS

Many folks (myself included) found Super Mario 64 DS to be hampered by clunky controls. The original N64 game was meant to be used with an analog Control Stick, not a Control Pad or touch screen. But the smooth action of the Nintendo 3DS system's Circle Pad makes the game *much* better. The control still isn't analog, but it's nearly as good. —CHRIS S.

MORE ON:

GHOST TRICK: PHANTOM DETECTIVE

I'm not usually a big fan of trial-and-error-heavy games, but Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective won me over with its combination of clever puzzles, a compelling murder-mystery plot, well-written dialogue, amazing animation, and memorable characters. This is easily one of my favorite titles of the year. (Granted, we're not that far into 2011, but still....) —JUSTIN C.



COMMUNITY

We can envision what a live-action Mega Man movie might look like after seeing these action figures.

FANDOM

Awesomely Altered

One man, hundreds of completely unique action figures.

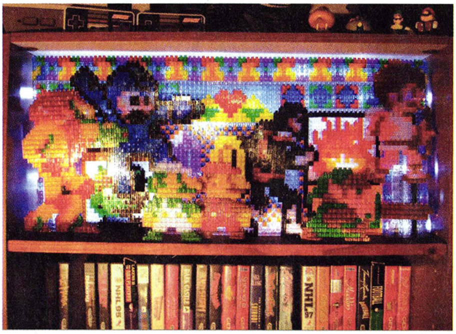
IT'S ALWAYS SURPRISING to see custom action figures that look like professional releases, but John Mallamas—the 33-year-old creator of these homemade tributes to characters from Mega Man, Contra, Resident Evil, and several other beloved games—brings a lifetime of experience to each of his impressive creations.

The Nashville, Tennessee, resident began taking apart his toys as a young child of just four or five, and cobbled together new creations from the pieces. "I'd unscrew the backs of the 3¾-inch G.I. Joes," explains Mallamas, "then swap parts, drill new holes, and add extra arms, and end up painting them with my mom's nail polish." From this start came a lifelong passion that progressed through painting tabletop-gaming miniatures, and selling a complete set of custom Star Wars figures as a teenager.

Since then, he's been pumping out custom figures on a regular basis, with his personal website—Jin Saotome's Dangerous Toys at www.jincustom.com—displaying hundreds of his creations based on games, comics, films, and television shows. In addition to demonstrating some of his most impressive transformations, including turning a Halo action figure into Mega Man, he's written detailed tutorials to help budding figure-customizers create their own one-of-a-kind mods.

According to Mallamas, his inspiration to transform a figure into something else typically comes from seeing a body part or accessory that reminds him of another character. "I saw SOTA's Cammy figure from Street Fighter and instantly thought, 'You know, with a new hat and some shoulder pads, that could be Jill [Valentine from Resident Evil].' Then I got to work finding a new body, swapping the head, sculpting her beret, and creating all the details that would change her into the new character," he shares. "With my Ryu Hayabusa from Ninja Gaiden, I saw a sword that prompted me to look for a decent ninja body to work with. A week later, I had the wielder of the Dragon Sword completed."

The amount of time and money spent on each creation can vary wildly, but Mallamas tells us he typically completes an average figure in four days, though he's frequently juggling multiple projects. He'll often begin with the base of a brand-new action figure, and then purchase loose figures or parts to find the right head to work with. From there, it's a process of using epoxy sculpting clay and paint to perfectly nail the intended look of the character—though he loves being able to repurpose parts and accessories whenever possible. "I like the challenge of looking at an existing figure or accessory and thinking up a new way to use it, rather than just sculpting the part from scratch," he admits. "People call it Frankensteining a custom together." Luckily, he's found steady success with his creations and even had custom commissions from toy-collector magazines and websites, which help bankroll his consistent output and keep him busy in his workshop. **—ANDREW H.**



FANDOM

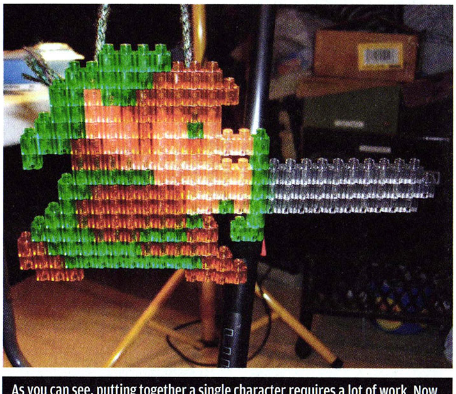
Illuminating Tribute

Get reacquainted with old friends

ONE OF THE great things about the many talented and dedicated Nintendo enthusiasts who offer up their fan creations to be featured in the Community section is that their efforts often inspire others. That's what happened with longtime reader Dean Kucy, 25, of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, who was so jazzed about one contributor's Airman and Mega Man pixel-block creations that he bought a heap of pixel blocks and set out to make his own NES tribute. Six weeks of hard work and 5,700 pixel blocks later, this incredible Nintendo-themed faux-stained-glass mural was complete.

"The NES [system's] 25th birthday was a huge deal for me, and I dedicate this piece to it for obvious reasons," says Kucy, who adds that Nintendo's new Nintendo 3DS handheld provided additional inspiration. "I wanted to combine the old with the new, since that is what Nintendo has done best for many years. I made it in layers to give it a 3D look."

Kucy sized the mural to fit perfectly in the top slot of his gaming shelf. Growing up, he says Mega Man, Simon Belmont, Mario, Luigi, and Link were among his favorite NES-game characters, and he's thrilled they're all still going strong so many years later. **—NATHAN M.**



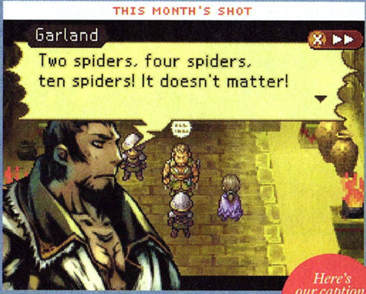
As you can see, putting together a single character requires a lot of work. Now imagine assembling a whole mural!

WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

SEND CAPTION TO **screentest@nintendopower.com.**

THIS MONTH'S SHOT



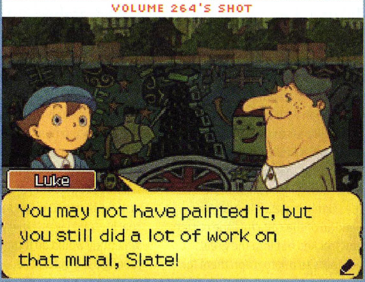
Garland

Two spiders, four spiders, ten spiders! It doesn't matter!

I'm so hungry that I could eat them all!

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 264'S SHOT



Luke

You may not have painted it, but you still did a lot of work on that mural, Slate!

"Luke didn't really know what he was talking about; he was kind of distracted by Mr. Slate's abnormally long nose." —WHALE33

"The rest of the NP crew was jealous when they discovered Chris Slate had a cameo in Professor Layton and the Unwound Future." —THELUCKYRABBIT

"Slate then realized that he actually did nothing." —THE ULTIMATE CREATION

"No, no, no, Luke. The slate is what the mural is painted on, but thank you for noticing my work." —TIM C.

"Slate's Jedi mind trick worked as Luke believed Slate had done a lot of work on that mural." —TRISKA

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

FANDOM

Putty Pikmin

Take a look at these captivating hand-crafted critters.

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS CAN be a drag at times, but there's no reason you can't find creative ways to have fun with homework. That's what college student and aspiring game artist Emily Bierstedt of San Macos, Texas, decided to do. Drawing inspiration from the Pikmin series, she crafted a handful of the colorful little critters and trekked out into the great outdoors to photograph them for a class project. Aside from being absolutely adorable, these playful pictures on natural terrain really bring the friendly fellows to life.

"The assignment was to create art in nature. Immediately my mind went to one of my favorite games, Pikmin," Bierstedt explains. "I could just see them running around in real life, and I was thinking about what they would do if they lived among us. It quickly became more of a personal project, experimenting with the interactions between the guys and how to make them look as believable as possible."

She molded the Pikmin out of Super Sculpey and stuck wires in their legs to embed them into the ground so they could stand on their own. After hand-painting them with a mixture of acrylic paint and waterproof paint pens, Bierstedt settled on adhesive googly eyes to complete their appearance. She says they're not quite 100-percent-accurate replicas of the original characters, but we're blown away by how close they look to their in-game counterparts and how much personality they exude.

With her tiny newfound companions completed, Bierstedt ventured to the neighborhood park with her roommate, and they had a blast setting up the little guys and creating dramatic scenes to photograph them in. "They are just so charming and adorable," she says of her sculpted Pikmin pals. "They are great subjects, alien enough to seem like a foreign animal or plant, but emotionally accessible. It seems that it's a great deal easier to convey emotions or ideas with nonhuman subjects, and these guys were just expressive enough to work."

When the project was completed, her fellow classmates loved the pictures and gave her a very positive critique. We can see why. Bierstedt also decided to expand on the original project, crafting additional Pikmin sculptures and taking more pictures to share with her friends. She says it was a great way to inject some added fun into her school work and she is looking forward to finding other ways to pair gaming-related subjects with her art. **—NATHAN M.**

Reader Emily Bierstedt did a fantastic job of bringing the Pikmin characters to life.

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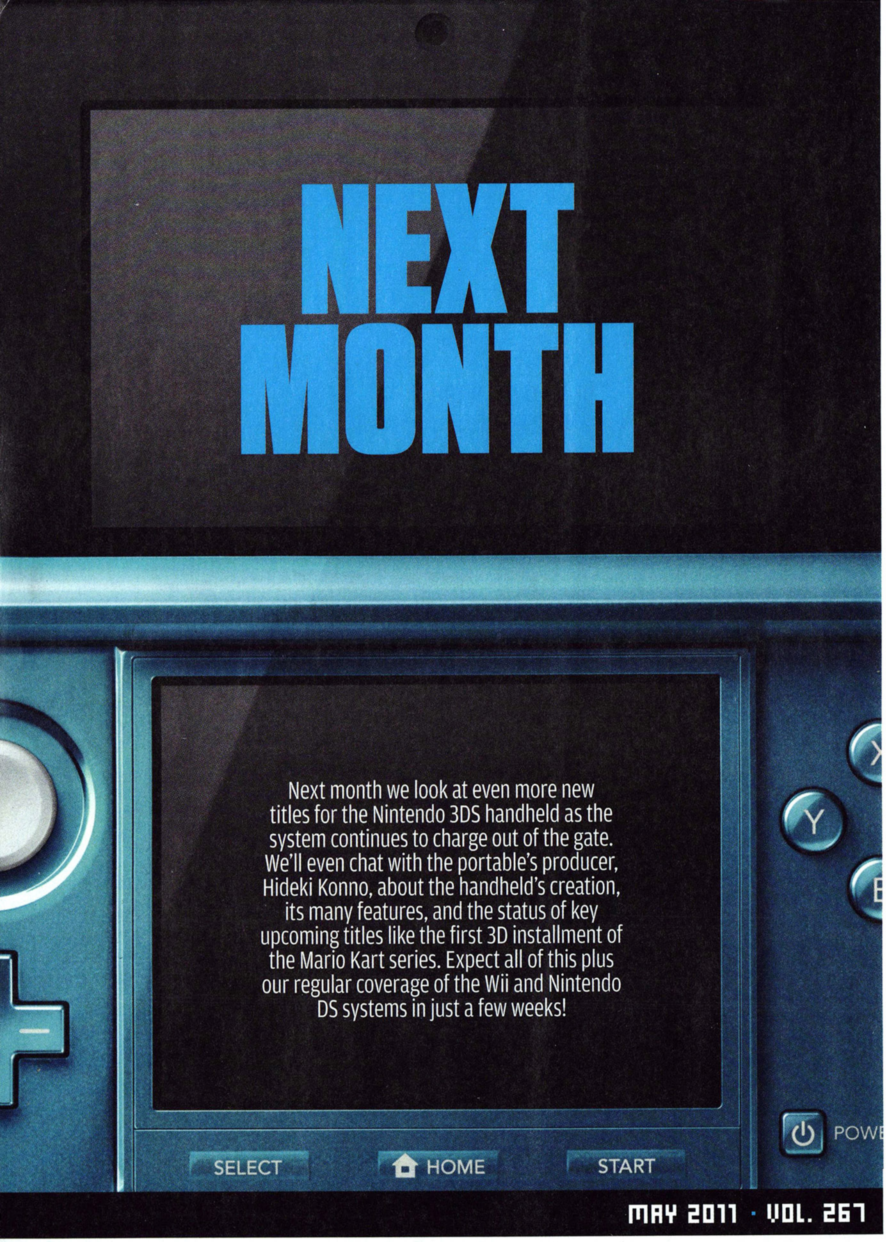

NEXT MONTH

Next month we look at even more new titles for the Nintendo 3DS handheld as the system continues to charge out of the gate. We'll even chat with the portable's producer, Hideki Konno, about the handheld's creation, its many features, and the status of key upcoming titles like the first 3D installment of the Mario Kart series. Expect all of this plus our regular coverage of the Wii and Nintendo DS systems in just a few weeks!

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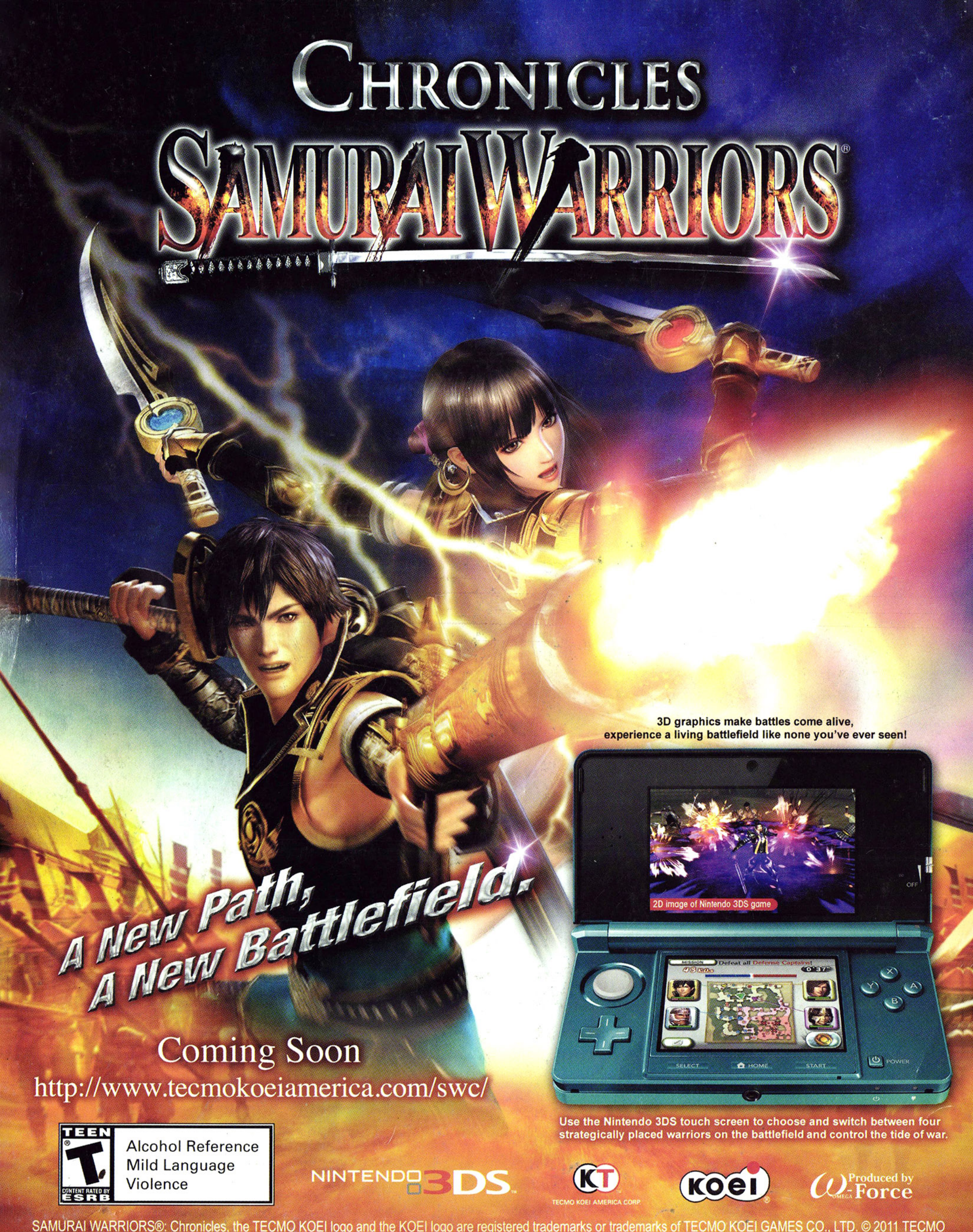
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2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

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TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Alcohol Reference
Mild Language
Violence

NINTENDO 3DS

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